The Hudson Review

VOLUME VII, NUMBER 1 SPRING 1954

The Lesson of Balzac's Stupidity	HERBERT GOLD	7
Ten Dreamers in a Motel (*verse*)	JOSEPHINE MILES	19
The Blue Men	JOHN SKOLLE	24
Poems:	EDWIN MUIR, PATRICIA COOMBS, LOUIS O. COXE	49
Miss Cudahy of Stowes Landing (*story*)	GEORGE P. ELLIOTT	58
Poems:	SOL STEIN, A. R. AMMONS, CHARLES GULLANS	83
Finnegans Wake and the Girls from Boston, Mass.	ADALINE GLASHEEN	89
The Pressure of Unreality	THOMAS H. CARTER	97
Some Masters and Some Others	SONYA RUDIKOFF	104
Prospective Cinema	GEORGE BARBAROW	112

Reviews:

Two Perspectives on European Literature	FRANCIS FERGUSSON	119
The Rescue of Aeschylus	DOUGLASS PARKER	127
The Puritan Experiment	PATRICK F. QUINN	131
A Book of Yes and No	MARK SCHORER	136
Formulas and Fictions	ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS	141
Formal Criticism and Abstract Art	JOSEPH FRANK	145
The Language as Spoken	ROBERT GRAVES	155

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HERBERT GOLD

The Lesson of Balzac's Stupidity

"Il ronfle comme un grand homme."
—Diderot, *Le Neveu de Rameau*

WHILE BECOMING KNOWLEDGEABLE about everything from style to sociology in the novel, we have gained something for which Balzac yearned and lost something which Balzac possessed. Chief of what we have gained is the conviction of limits—modesty, patience, the duck of the head which knows how far (and no further). What we have lost is the conviction that a man can first assert that one city is the world and then that this city is *his*. Such a statement requires a sublime stupidity.[1]

We are all too aware that there are worlds within worlds, your world as good as mine or a bit better, and therefore none of them worth mastering. Our real masters are given us as capitalized abstractions, History, God, Superego, Managerial Revolution, Democratic Process, etc. With such a multiplicity of worlds to be met (not mastered: in this game one can wrestle in one's own neighborhood, but only visit the many), it is no wonder that a clever manipulation and a self-effacing irony which says, "It doesn't really matter",—a statement which is death on the novel, —come to give us the parthenogenesis of authorlings into new sorts of novels. The reedy and pretty novel, the dogmatic novel, the symbolic novel, the disguised lyric poem, the disguised history or sociology text, the disguised case history (not so disguised usually): all flourish except the form which is so magnificently equipped by its opportunities and its tradition for the play in which each man can be inquisitor and green imp, lord of Molly Bloom, and Prometheus unto himself. In the world of the novel, a rock to which Balzac chained himself, he could master love and death, fact and the fire of decay, work and ambition and the unknowable destiny of peoples. Now our hands are too tender to carry fire; we gossip about minor figures, sometimes joylessly erotic 'midst the magnolias, sometimes joylessly violent amid our

[1]And an obsessive-compulsive character structure, or if you like Balzac even less: paranoid.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

complexes and our prospects. The modern "artistic" novel has developed at the scholarly roots and also, like a certain potato of my acquaintance, planted in water on the mantelpiece, it has put out long leafy twinings of fancy. The fringe off the root takes the light coolly, and squirms when a step passes; the pale leaves are nice, too. (The pretty capote! the well-turned bowles! O, les belles en fleurs!) But the true potato[2]—the hard and nourishing thing—has gone soft.

Despite his histrionics, Balzac is hard where it tells. Despite his inflation and consequent debasing of the currency of ideas, the root of his impulse is one which both contains and uses his power. He doesn't need to depend on oxidation, which is slow decay, for the elaboration of personality, or sexuality by binary fission for love. His plant grows in the garden; he cooks with gas. Whether he creates or destroys, he moves in another world from those who swim in their substance, bobbing gracefully perhaps while they submit to us the ebbing of life and the desire of death.

Balzac met decay in his world. The shrinking of the *peau de chagrin* prefigured the willed death of Louis Lambert (and of Balzac) in the sight of the impossible. His dreads, even the most modern one of self-disclosure, and his hopes, even the most modern one of taking an adequate emotional relation to others, are our hopes and dreads. His technique as a novelist (pre-Proust, pre-Joyce, pre-James) is such as to give no special avenue to the expression of self-consciousness; consequently the personality of his people and himself has been soaked up into his scenes, and the furniture, the walls, the air he breathes are heavy with the revelation bound up within him which they carry. Here his naiveté is that of the infant, whose circumstances force it to consider all the world as recalcitrant extensions of itself. We can disengage Balzac's symbols or we can read the *Comédie Humaine* as an astonished text on manners, but to rest on either of these two most stylish justifications for his novels is to give excuses to ourselves for our pleasure. The plain fact is that Balzac believes that he is master of all he surveys, that at his frequent best he convinces us that he really is, and that he proposes for each of us a condition

[2]Certainly there are still novelists among us. The sense of fact in Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*, for one example, is such as to give his "irony" of invisibility some of the color and plasticity of life. He succeeds, at least partially, because he is not afraid of his symbol; it is first of all a fact which he knows, not an irony.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of dignity and mastery in the face of the misery and the joy of activity in the world. Can we look for more than to participate in this conviction, which means to act upon it?

The willed evolution of a Balzac is the moral equivalent of war: "intrepidity, contempt of softness, obedience to command" —and the command originating from within, as William James, the good brother, certainly understood it. His work is the rock upon which (to paraphrase William James again) a state of mind is built, a state of dignity and hardihood, of what is "extremest and supremest out of human nature" in the extreme risk for the supreme prize of a sacramental participation in human affairs. Despite his yearning for the quick, ardent, and tragic solution, James sees that the bellicose heroes of modern violence are only as hard as nails—which means as brittle and as blunt as the head of a nail. What James seeks without war is what Balzac gives us, men made incandescent by the hot charge of honor *for* a specific self and desire *of* specific ends, and inflamed temper bent on doing work. Balzac and his heroes lack one virtue of the city of James' vision; their pride is a public demonstration, not a public sympathy. Balzac finds no singing C.C.C. boys, marching happily into the barracks, in his scrutiny of what-should-be. This failure to imagine cooperation, fine, strong, and "unskilled in meanness", is a lack in Balzac; very well, he lacks it. He regarded the world; perhaps we can make what we will of what he saw. Community may be possible, but not without reckoning with Balzac's vision— its terrible goatishness, yes, but also the challenge of its strongest distillation of blood.

*

The movement from Balzac to Kafka is not to be moved back by moralities. It is a party to the movement from the individual passionate brutalities of revolutionary France toward the scientific precision of the S.S. professors who performed experiments *in vivo* on their victims. While the concentration camp is still foreign to most of us, we docilely accept the helplessness of the individual, a condition which is part of the mythology of modern America. We dwell in it almost smugly: "Go fight City Hall. . . ." *Fortune* tells us that the mighty corporation executive, on his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

way, may arrive at the Cadillac or stall at the Pontiac, according to his wife's waffles, hairdo, and adaptability in making the climb with him. To attain the highest power of which Boris Godounov sings, one must know how to shed the house, habits, and partners of the old expense-account bracket. One wiggles into glory among managers as the commuter wiggles into a place on his train. Even the topdog consumer has been brought to realize that his genius is as naught if his aftershave doesn't smell like Gregory Peck's and if he is caught in a white shirt when the Man with the Patch says, "No sir, not this year, a sporting plaid is the thing." With Howdy Doody in the bosom of the family, he suffers the persecution of his children, ill-satisfied by a seventeen-inch screen when twenty-one is the rule. This generation, still reeling from its authoritarian parents, gets no chance at turnabout. Its children, authoritarian experts on candidates in color or three-dimensional toothpaste, know more about its values than the old folks who were alive before television.

We are victims more than we victimize. Even the tyrant of our day must have dreams of abnegation worthy of the Baron de Charlus. We take pleasure in being violated, our capital invested in the passivity of a Kafka or an F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Our diminished sense of individual power can be traced in the history of an anecdote. It is said that Balzac carried a thick, heavy, beturquoised cane, rich with rare woods and filigree, on which he had carved: *This cane breaks everything.* Whatever the pathology of such a gesture, we can see Balzac really believing the legend, fondling his stick, pushing it before him, poking the bushes and the gutters on his way. And in fact, Balzac's cane, which was his Comédie Humaine, *did* crack open for him the nineteenth century world of the solitary passion entering the lists against the industrial revolution and the monolithic state and the corporation a-borning. He may not have understood his society, which was ours in the raw, but his wrestling with it is one of the finest things in literature.

Kafka heard tell of Balzac's cane. We can easily imagine the chance for a joke on himself which he must have seen at once. We can feel the shy smile, the kindly and malicious immolation of self in almost any page of Kafka's long gripe about the world-too-much-with-him and his own inefficacity. He bought a cane and had written on it: *This cane is broken by everything.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is not fair to mourn the novel as an experience of mastery and then to blame the novelists for failing to be better than the rest of us. This time it is not our purpose to be fair. Although the moral issue is fossilized within the facts of our lives, we can allow ourselves the refreshment of behaving like Moses—striking the stone and cursing it if some fine drink does not spring forth. Moralizing at least has the virtue of reminding us of the goods of the past. (And Moses got water.) Rastignac, magnificent in his flawed ambition and both maker and witness to his destiny, no longer distraught by pity and terror, looked down over Paris and shook his fist and cried out: "To us two now!" He meant that Paris was his: he would know her in the way that he knew women. His illusions were gone, his dependence was gone, he was ready to be an operator: a capitalist in the anarchic and archaic sense for which it is time to confess our great nostalgia.

Not a financier, not an engineer, not a chairman or a director.

One great urban executive says, "What's good for my corporation is good for my country and me",—and means it. In another time he would have a *raison d'état* for uttering these atrocious words; this year it is an article of faith. He can identify his own destiny with that of his board of directors, and make the world cozy once more by reducing the nation to the dimensions of a prosperous business, healthily backlogged with government orders. César Birotteau, Balzac's comic hairdresser, had a better understanding of what he was really about. Gentle and timorous as he was, he would have been willing to cast off from his family and his world if he suspected a chance thereby to increase the sale of *l'Huile Céphalique,* a pomade designed to preserve the hair and promote the general welfare by keeping the scalp and the brains at a constant temperature. As God, Descartes, and Muntz believe in themselves, so did Birotteau believe in the cephalic oil which he himself blessed by the act of funneling it into a ragpicker's bottles. Shared by us, his fury is his immortality. He is comic, dangerous, pathetic by turn, swept by ambition and by fortune, but always he is a man and we know where he stands and therefore where we stand in relation to him. Here resides the secret: despite his foolishness and his feebleness, his desires are *his.* It is his own ambition which drives him. It is himself who is the instrument of his fall.

In our time the engineer is the image of instrumentality, but even the executive is the creature of his Board and of the voice-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

less, faceless shareholders, who live in their proxies and their nominal control as a nutty desert wanderer might live in his mirage of ore. The executive's desires are those of the corporation, what the French call the *société anonyme;* and this executive is the figure of power in our world. We can hardly ask the mere novelist to be a man, which means to make decisions and to act upon them, if the great men cannot. The analogy to business applies equally to politics, which, as David Riesman suggests, has become a consumer art, in which the candidate (the product) is sold like chlorophyl or vitamin pills. He may or may not taste good and be good for you, but he exercises his cunning at avoiding any identification with painful decision. The democratic leader, during the explosive first modern growth of democracy, was a tragic figure —a man like the rest of us, only better; the contemporary political leader in the time of consumership is comic in the sense in which Aristotle uses this word—a breathless sprinter like the rest of us, only worse. We heap our sins, not our virtues, upon his head. The democratic "will of the people", as conceived by the philosophers of the Enlightenment, personified in a single figure moving in the public agony of decision, has been replaced by the gravid will of the lemmings. The committee secretes action as a rodent secretes more rodents. A half-serious academic poet during the last war dedicated himself to a long celebration of the lemmings' sublimely mindless unity of purpose.

There was nothing smooth, cozy, or easy for Balzac. All death was suicide; it ended nothing. The lemmings or mass man drowning in war have not even decided upon suicide; their only choice is the negative one implied in their failure to make livable decisions on this earth. Where Balzac gives us the failure of genius, Arthur Miller's Abstract Salesman suggests a dramatic tautology: See this old flop? Look! he's a flop, always was, had to be.[3]

[3]The stage is cluttered with this sort of comedy. William Inge's agonists in *Come Back, Little Sheba* might almost have been produced by a Univac fed upon the tape marked, "Female, Oh Lost Dreams, With Male Attachments." It is not even a dialectical advance on *Death of a Salesman;* it is the simple converse, or at the most, a retooling job. Even more than the novel, our theater appears to be replaced by one of the applied marvels of the electronic age. Just as a Bell Telephone scientist can construct mechanical mice which do everything, including maze running, except the acts of pleasurable copulation and shedding real dirt, so Miller, Inge, and Tennessee Williams, the "young" playwrights of current favor, can construct maze-running lemmings endowed with all the human gimmicks necessary in order to inform us that we are no longer human. The middle-class audiences of these plays wallow in their masochism. "Wasn't the acting *good?* Terrific!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Balzac and the people of Paris during the fifty years before him made desperate mistakes, but they were their own; they thought, labored, and fought for their errors; if doomed, a man took his own commitment to the grave, and therefore his death was not the end of him. Each hair on the tail of France contributed to the world's wagging. The witty jungle of Paris, which was Balzac's world, had no limits. Its crown reached out to the provinces and Australia, and its roots, magically, into the past. All that Balzac knew of life on earth was objectified in such a creation as that of the criminal genius, Vautrin, the master of works and the suppliant of love, an image of human passion which can lose its sense only when men make their society perfect enough to rival those of the ants, the bees, and the lemmings. Balzac forgot nothing, using his memory not as sanctuary but as the measure of things in the present. His intelligence and his sensibility burrowed fiercely into his calculations. Everything nourished his scheming. The struggle to be born, on the one side: he even created his name and family. From the original Balssa, a family of village artisans, came first "Balzac" and then the noble particle of "de Balzac". The struggle to die, on the other: no one ever gives up in Balzac's world. The dying man molds his life by the manner of his death. Old Goriot dwells in his death as in a climactic instance of passion for his daughters. Even Balzac himself, dying, calls for a great doctor of his invention, who played a role in his novels of twenty years before, crying out, "Get Vaudissart! He will save me." Nothing escaped his judgment and the struggle for status, love, money, the power and the glory of a man alive before the immense potentiality of the earth. In fact, in this world which he created in order to conquer, death itself was no end to his manipulations. *I have a fortune,* he seems to tell us, *I will go on going on.* Whether in love or in the creative heat, he managed to strike the coin of his future out of the credit of his firm needs in the present. A spendthrift schemer, a glutton for time, he purchased warrants on immortality in his work and in the legend of his life.

On the issue which Balzac made to carry most of the burden, the question of money, he demonstrated on numerous occasions in both his books and his life that he was not lulled by accomplishment. This realist embodied the eternal in romanticism. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

felt his power only each day in the pain and joy of striving, and, like the famous general, he was able to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. When his writing began to give him a measure of security, he turned from it to schemes still more grandiose, courting bankruptcy with the assiduity of a swain. Watch this high flight of one of his typical characters, himself:

A writer decides that his publishers are making too much profit on his books; he will publish and distribute them himself. He begins to lose money. Should he back down? No, he will manage his own printshop and eliminate the printer's costs. The printshop declines toward ruin; he buys a type foundry. Meanwhile, out of his imaginary profits, he plans the furnishings of a magnificent house, although all he has money to do is to make chalk indications on the wall: here a Gobelin tapestry, here a shelf of Sèvres, here a bed fit to sail the Nile (in the Nile's good days, understand, when every bullrush still remembered its complicity with Moses and the banks of the river still echoed the smacks exchanged by Marc Antony and Cleopatra). Balzac runs between his house and his writing-table and his business, haggling, bluffing, manipulating, covering his margin by new borrowing. Finally the entire edifice crumbles, and next thing we know (eight or ten novels later), our innocent is hiding behind sliding panels from a mob of creditors, wrapped in his monkish robe and sustaining himself by cup after cup of coffee as he broods over geological maps in the hope of finding silver mines in Italy.

This cane breaks everything!

Does it make any difference that this boisterous man with bad teeth and a slovenly belly is a figure of ridicule as he rushes out after a night's work to talk, talk, talk? That his schemes are doomed? That the only furniture his great house ever saw were the chalkmarks on the wall? That his novels are hasty, ill-contrived, wasteful, more stuffed with dustcatchers than a taxidermist's shop? This his ideas are willful, deadwrong, an anthology of the fads of an autodidact? That he himself suggests clinical categories?

Well, yes, it does matter to us, but for this reason: It forces us to give ourselves, if we can give ourselves over to him at all, to what is important in his work and in the lesson of his career. The guiding movement in all these stupidities is his reasoned and open-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eyed effort to do everything; he was driven to conquer the world. While he mobilized himself without mercy, he made his gesture with no great sense of fuss. Certainly he failed.

We need such triumphant failures. The system-builders who are intelligent enough to succeed in making their novels carry out their plans waste our time and our eyes. Poor Balzac! He wanted to prove so many things about Science and Woman, the Monarchy and the True Faith and the *Concupiscence Mobilière,* the wisdom of the East and the hidden secrets of Phrenology—and all he could give us for true was the movement of his desire. He did not wallow in his rut after power, as did, say, a Thomas Wolfe; he really went after it, as have few in history. One might compare the aging Balzac's monumental trans-European wooing of Madame Hanska, his letters, plans, promises, protestations, demands, entreaties, and finally his pursuit of her into the Ukraine, to another great campaign—Napoleon's march on Moscow. Each took his prize but hardly had time to enjoy it. Balzac's marriage is the fitting climax to a lifelong strategic assault on love, overwhelmed by death, as was all Napoleon's strategy, because the conception was out of joint with the facts of life on earth. We know that love is not a fortress. We can also know through Balzac's struggle our own effort at coercion, assault, and making love the equivalent of our desire. A woman sometimes does behave like a rival state. This *is* a fact of our lives, and thus Balzac makes more sense than we suspected and in a way we had not guessed.

A novel by Balzac lives not in the imitation of action which Aristotle prescribes for the proper tragedy, nor in the imitation of character which is the virtue of so many more faulty works (novels which leave us dazed and paralyzed by recognition of ourselves), but in the translation of a passion for meaningful action and the impress of a personality made holy by will. The difficult word "holy" almost speaks itself when we consider Balzac. His will charged him with ritual gesture, a total commitment to perfection, and the responsibility for human sacrifice. (Mostly he sacrificed himself.) Although his hero-villains lift themselves by their own bootstraps, they really lift themselves; to them and to us, the inevitable thud is worth the takeoff. If they fly an hour and their wings are melted by the sun, they keep on trying, even if they have only the stumps of their shoulderblades as flappers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They may be Wrong-way Corrigans, but they get there. The goal is each instant along the way. This sometimes makes the end of a Balzac novel unsatisfactory to our present taste. When he's finished for the moment, he dumps his characters without ceremony, leaving us only a rapid offhand summary of their future prospects and the fate of their descendants. It's as if he says, "I've given you what you need. Now here, you supply the rest." Of course, Balzac has taken from the character what *he* needed of him. The rest of us can make our own calculations from the careers of Vautrin or Rubempré or Rastignac or Louis Lambert. They know, and therefore we know, what their passions are worth.

Balzac doesn't have to know.

*

It is not polite to advertise for a novelist who can dwell in the conviction which Balzac possesses of self-determination in the teeth of an endlessly determined universe. Nevertheless, the facts of the twentieth century are attenuations of the facts of the nineteenth century; this is one of the accidental reasons that Balzac still summons us to him with such authority. When we look at the facts of our lives, and at the ferocious evidence of them in his novels, we are tempted to brand him with the charge of pigheadedness in his glee before fact. Despite his repertory of lives in disaster, his dominant impulse before a new person is to relish him. Instance: *La Rabouilleuse*. He seems blind. He seems a moral monster. How else can he animate his people under such a weight of valuation of himself and of certitude that the victory can be carried off? He gives us all we need to condemn him: first of all, his own gaucheries, meanderings, and scenery-chewing, the manic grasping after furniture and intellectual clutter; second (but really unimportant to a man for whom activity alone has the reality of value), the simple fact of defeat which he recognizes not only for Birotteau, but also for Vautrin and Rastignac, and even for his impossible saintly bores. The defeat serves incidentally, and trivially, the obligation to social realism; its deepest sense is to try his people in the hardest of all possible ways, to try them past their breaking point. Their immolation is a function of Balzac's fierce optimism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The plight of what M. R. Kadish has called "the miserable man", or the situation of Martin Buber's anguished skeptic, who, worse than saying *yes* or *no* wrongly, is unable to say yes or no at all,—this is alien to Balzac. Their "misery" is the greatest indignity of a man, whether decision is impossible because of the prisoner's chains or because of the invisible shackles proximate to our flesh in the world of lemmings. Aristotle named Man the rational animal; it is through our ability to try fact, to think, and to decide that we become individuals, construct associations of persons, make governments, are human. In the indignity of being unable to choose because the conditions of effective choice do not exist, a man reverts to an earlier label—"the featherless biped"—which is Plato's high lingo for a skinned chicken, a sitting duck, and a cooked goose.

Witness the work of André Gide or François Mauriac for examples in modern France of the two subtypes of the miserable man. Gide's *acte gratuit* represents a choice without determination other than hysteria; that is, it is psychologically determined from within a helpless creature desperate to find some causal involvement in the affairs of his world; therefore an accident from the aspect of decision; therefore only as willful as a tantrum. Mauriac's prisoners of the flesh can say yes or no to God, and this is certainly a choice, but it is all that they are permitted to say and no individual experience can contribute significantly to the value of their option. The moral equivalent of a novel by Mauriac is one of Sholokov (the thump-thump-thump of History) or Dreiser (Society is out to get you, and boo, there she is). The choice that needs no intelligence, and is unaltered in its quality by experience, becomes, even in men like Mauriac and Graham Greene who retain some sense for intelligent action and the prize of life on earth, a gored thrashing on the horns of their dilemma.

How can they value human life when the choice is really just as valid if it's made from outside our ken?

How can a human being have artistic or any other value if he is not valued for that which utters his humanity?

The example of a Balzac judges them. Neither anguished edibles, eaten by the cruel-cruel world but saved in the divine digestion, nor moral desperadoes, kicking strangers off trains and telling, Balzac's people always have a clear sense of what they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

want and how to get it. They may not succeed. They may sometimes change their desires; they are too canny to be constant. But it is through a continuing movement of passion that they accomplish their feat of self-determination, and this makes them both true to humankind and larger than humankind and moving images of the world of men in our greatest trial as men. Balzac believes in their will. He puts this gift upon them. Formless, the novels are structured with will. Nietzsche, more abstract, overpolemical, and less attached to the flesh and *things*, was possessed of the same optimism.

That Balzac preserved his sense of value in human effort, that he went on scheming and searching and rehearsing the perspectives of dominion over his world (while Nietzsche was tricked up by syphilis, which is par excellence the revenge of fact), and that Balzac's impossible ambition is still vital to us,—these are good things to consider. He was guilty of hubris and deus ex machina, dull catalogues and purple patches, quackeries, opportunism, and axes-to-grind. He did not know as much as most slick fiction practitioners do about the construction of a story, about what is called "motivation", even about how our world is really going. What Balzac did know (and the quality of this knowledge!—he even snores with pride) is that he is important, his people are important, and they have been born with the power to contend as persons in the struggle for mastery of their lives. His effort assures us that virtue arises from the passionate use of self within a society of passion: "The individual is a haunting of the social form." Balzac lives in the vision of an audience which, using his conviction to complete its knowledge, will try in action the sense of its virtue. While no evidence is ever complete, he assumes that human beings like these exist, together with a world still open to significant possibility.

Our world could do with novelists possessed by such a stupidity. We need them to give us the good news of what we can build upon toward a future as men.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOSEPHINE MILES

Ten Dreamers in a Motel

1

Some people said the cabin
Wouldn't hold us two,
Two hundred and forty pounds,
Two hundred and twenty two.

But note wherever we moved
Back or face to face
Outside the windows flew
Hundreds of butterflies.

So that within our walls,
Walls that denied us well,
Glimmered the wing that tells
All things are possible.

To elephant and elephant
Stalking exact apart
The centennial memory
Of a light heart.

2

At this dinner I was telling you about
Next door to this motel
Was your pal your host,
And me, and a mother, daughter
Come to greet you back, how they loved you.

She for the past as if a bowl of carnations
Sat with the chicken,
She for the chicken
He for the silverware.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The lines of life which moved between you
Like toy tramcars
Were also like toy speedsters
Building up speed
An electric party.

Except, between us, you
And me met to greet you back,
Was absence still.
A freedom free enough to kill.

3

One day we started out
To pick up driftwood. I was interested
In a housing project there, I had heard a lecture
Illuminating the beach like lightning.
It was my concern
To raise on the shingle rows of boards
On which the great foundations could be built.

Rather, I found the shanties were up already,
And indeed down already, every one
Empty to the tide as if just then
They had been lived in but would live no more.
I turned round.
If I had been looking south I looked north.
East west I turned.

4

When we came back all the underpasses were flooded,
Highway forty blocked off
And six inches of water at the supermarket.
So it was necessary to go round by the byroads.

So it was that we came to our street from a different view,
Saw our neighborhood from aside and below,
Stacked up the hill our houses in their shrub,
Their windows empty as an evening sky.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And so it was we saw that they dwelt without us
Endured merrily as bastions against our presence,
Persons of note and self in the rainy evening,
Lampless and starless.

5

On which of the many hills
Of suburbs out beyond the State Fair on Saturday morning
Did we pasture our goats?
Up down over the Marguerite Street district
We saw the angel ladders behind before us
But not that field in which our thoughts were bound.

Conceive if you can the animal desolation
Which besieged us on all sides other districts than our own.
We were, myself and self, not enough to ensure
Any comfort of company, but one who will say
So it is, and not let me deny, say
Let us go back by the municipal railway.

6

Caromed out of town in a comedy chase fashion
Police oblique to our path, and statues
Wheeled over, through Harlem, and all more wasteful as we went,
And ended up at this tourist cabin,
Its outlook, so it was said, restful.

Went to the window,
Pushed aside the curtains and there saw
That countryside we longed for: rocks
Steep slopes of rocks, rubble and rusk of rocks.
What is it? and you said, *moraine.*

7

I saw a field of folks in fit array,
A circus field, or fair,
A tumbler tintwister and autocourt carnival
Brought for the day.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Among which I went, larking and singing,
Crowding and wandering, till
Where was I? everybody wandered
While I stood still, longing

To find myself out, there to find,
And in relief
I felt at my shoulder, straight beside me,
Father or friend.

But it was not, but a strange
Present person who stood,
To whom that field fair and carnival
And I, he said, belonged.

8

I went to consult a psychiatrist on this morning
A nervous woman, whose curly-headed four-year-old child
Played in the room, sitting staunchly
On a great medical scales.

I argued myself thus. It looks as if
All this weariness came from too much work,
But rather I think it a problem of person,
Friend or foe, fortune of parent or pardon.

The nervous psychiatrist ran her hand through her hair
And glanced at her watch. Have you taken a trip lately,
It would do you good, and take your mother with you,
She needs it more than you do.

Then I laughed to hear my own prescription
Given to myself with such good humor
In the grey weariness. But then she said also,
Take with you also my curly-headed four-year-old child.

9

I said to my iron class, I am desperate, desperate,
You must learn and you will not.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Each by each I looked to into the light and said
You are fast in darkness.

Each to each I said I am desperate, desperate.
Then one rose from his seat and sat beside me
Touching my hand and saying, out of his daylight,
Do not despair.

10

Midway stayed at a court between there and here
Where woodsmoke rose up straight into the sky
Cabin by cabin the suppers cooking
Far as the eye could see, the courts unfolding
Durable darkness.

It was the tent and citadel of the many stars
And was the rampart of the loud highway
And we slept there, waking
Into the thunder and silence of the unfolding
Durable journey.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOHN SKOLLE

The Blue Men

THE NOMADS SAY: NEVER leave except on a Thursday. I thought of this as I sat squeezed among five native passengers in the cab of a Trans-Saharan truck one windy Wednesday. The motor was snorting on the inside of the cab right under our noses and the heavily loaded vehicle heaved and rattled over the rough washboard road that winds through sand and rock across the desert. With luck, it takes seven days to reach the military post of Tamanrasset, thirteen hundred odd miles south of Algiers. I was prepared to brave fate, hardships and bureaucracy to become acquainted with the Tuareg tribesmen, one of the least known and most baffling peoples of Africa.

The classic movie version of the Sahara is an endless vista of dunes. In reality only about one sixth of it is exclusively sand. The total area of the Sahara (from *sahra:* desert) is larger than the United States, and the utter desolation of certain parts of it can hardly be imagined. Only once, in a three-day stretch, did the landscape come to life: when a herd of gazelle pelted across the wasteland into the distance.

In Tamanrasset it is still an event when a truck comes bouncing down its one wide street—which leads straight through the town past one-story adobe houses to the military post and the stronghold of Father Charles de Foucauld, the soldier, scholar and missionary who was murdered by fanatical Senoussi during the first World War. I stopped at a hotel that was little better than a flophouse but with infinitely higher rates. It had water faucets but no running water, bare lightbulbs but no electricity, iron bedsteads with motheaten mattresses, and medieval sanitary arrangements. In the shabby bar the refreshment consisted of Pernod, dirty stories, sticky Anisette and lukewarm water. The French civilians glanced suspiciously at the few foreigners; the men in uniform, no less suspicious, remained strenuously aloof. Outside, veiled Tuareg tribesmen sauntered up and down the dusty street.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Many attempts have been made to classify the Tuareg ethnologically, but none has proceeded very far beyond the belief that they are "a Berber people". One French novelist has stretched the puzzle of their origin to the point of portraying them as the survivors of Atlantis. Eminent authorities on the Sahara, notably Professor E. F. Gautier, believe them to be not merely a remnant but the ancestors of the ancient Egyptians and the direct descendants of the Garamantians, a highly civilized Saharan people. They speak a language called Tamachec and use the only known Berber script: Tifinar, which can be written equally well from left to right, right to left, up or down. Socially they are divided into three classes: nobles, vassals and Sudanese slaves, the present Harratin. Each tribe is headed by a chief (Amrar), the confederation by a sovereign (Amenokal). The men's practice of hiding their faces, a unique custom, has never been satisfactorily explained. Some believe it to be a safeguard to prevent evil spirits from entering the body through the nose and mouth, others say that it is a protection against dust. They keep their faces hidden day and night, lifting the veil from below only when eating or drinking. The women, contrary to Moslem convention, go unveiled and enjoy absolute freedom until they decide to get married. The Tuareg abhor chickens and eggs and consider manual labor the lowest form of human degradation. They are nominally Moslem, but their lives are almost entirely guided by superstitious beliefs and by their faith in numerous amulets, worn on head, arms, legs and chests to ward off every imaginable evil.

They bitterly resented the French conquest of the Sahara, knowing that it would put an end to the chief occupation of their lives: the safeguarding or raiding (as the case might be) of caravans that crossed their undisputed territory. The Arabs, in mortal fear of them, dubbed the Tuareg the Abandoned of God; but they call themselves Kel Tagilmus, the People of the Veil. True nomads, they roam over an area of approximately one million five hundred thousand square miles throughout the southern Sahara and parts of the French Sudan. The movements of the various tribes are dictated by the need of pasture for their camels and goats. Since it does not rain for years on end they migrate over enormous distances in the times of severe drought. To-day they show a supreme indifference toward their conquerors, and their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contempt for the Arabs has been extended to include airplanes and automobiles. For a long time they frowned upon the use of firearms because of the undignified noise they made and because it seemed cowardly to kill at a distance. They have few children, thanks to highly effective contraceptive methods held in secret by the women (one of three operations being the use of a substance similar to alum). Their songs are devoted to war, camels and love.

One of the outstanding tragedies of the French conquest occurred when the fever over the construction of a Trans-Saharan railroad was at its height. Colonel Flatters—whom some were to call heroic, others incompetent—had been sent south from Ouargla in December 1880 with ten French officers and eighty Arab soldiers disguised as camel drivers. The chief of the Tuareg of the Hoggar, Ahitaghel, had tried at first to dissuade the members of the expedition from entering his territory. When they made it known that they were determined to continue he sent them a number of guides. These guides later persuaded Colonel Flatters and four of his officers to accompany them to a well near Tadjmout. Leaving the main body of his troops behind, the colonel and his men set out for the well of Bir el Gharama, where they were attacked and killed. The native soldiers who managed to escape returned to camp and retreated north at once with the rest of the troops in the hope of eventually reaching Ouargla, but their scant provisions soon gave out and more and more stragglers were left to die. Those who found their way to waterholes were killed by waiting Tuareg, and some of the remaining officers, after accepting dried dates from a band of warriors, ran off shrieking and laughing until they expired from the effects of the poison. None of the Europeans survived, and only a few exhausted Arab soldiers managed to reach Ouargla, five weeks after the attack at Bir el Gharama, by subsisting on the corpses of their comrades.

Twenty years later, Tuareg resistance was broken in the Hoggar. A poem by one of the participants, preserved by Charles de Foucauld, is a pathetic final note to their defeat.

This I can tell you, fair women
And all of you who wear blue over mouth and nostrils:

Amessa was the scene of a violent combat

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

With lances, the guns of the pagans, and unsheathed swords.
I advanced toward the enemy, I struck and was struck
Until blood covered my shoulders and arms like a blanket.
The young women who play the violins will not be told
That I hid among the rocks,
For is it not true that, having fallen three times,
I was lifted up three times and carried away, unconscious,
Tied to a camel with ropes?
Because of this:
Defeat is not dishonor.
Long ago the pagans were victorious over the Prophet himself.

They came to the conclusion that one of the rules of survival is to "kiss the hand you cannot sever". But the plan "to transform into workers these eternal and useless vagabonds" has not succeeded. The only suitable job for them within the framework of the military administration is that of *méhariste*. Enlistment in the French Camel Corps is on a voluntary basis, and the terms are remarkably fair and flexible. Volunteers retain their native dress and may cancel their enlistment at any time for valid reason, the administration similarly reserving the right to dismiss any man should his services no longer be required. If qualified, they receive a monthly salary and may draw an advance payment to help them furnish their camels and personal equipment. The army provides the arms and ammunition. The *méharistes* are responsible for their provisions and the upkeep of their mounts. Funds for the replacement of camels are available only if loss or injury occur in the course of a military action.

My first contact was with a young noble who spoke excellent French. He was leaning against the counter of one of the tiny native stores in Tamanrasset, idly studying the labels on the marmalade jars. A beautiful *takouba,* the long straight sword of the Tuareg, dangled at his hip. As I entered he adjusted his veil and turned to me with languid elegance to extend his slim hand, placing his palm against mine without pressing it and withdrawing it abruptly in the conventional greeting of his people. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

upshot of the ensuing conversation was that he asked me: "You ride camel?"

"Yes," I said, "I would like to ride camel."

"To-morrow morning, six o'clock."

Bahh ag Aksabah's camels lay ruminating superciliously in the dry river bed: Erraït, the Strong One, and Abberrim, Not Much White. They bared their teeth and produced a great variety of gurgling sounds while the *rahlas* (saddles) were placed in front of the hump and the cinch was passed through the natural crevice under the chest.

The first step in mounting a Saharan camel is to take off one's sandals, for the only direct contact the rider has with his mount is with his bare feet in the crook of the camel's neck, the left one in front of the right, the high cross-shaped pommel between his legs. If the animal doesn't rise of its own accord, a slight pull on the single rein (which passes under the jaw to the left side of the head) or a tap with the right heel will make it get on its knees, lift up its hindquarters and rise to its front feet in three successive awe-inspiring jolts. The rider's feet must remain on the neck to insure forward motion. If the pressure is relaxed, most camels will immediately proceed to lie down, and if a rider's left foot should slip upward against the back of the camel's head, his mount is very apt to buck.

Bahh, of course, did not grab the wool on the hump behind for support. He pinched the camel's nose with his left hand jerking the head sideways, stepped on the neck with his left foot and swung his right leg over the saddle as the animal heaved upward, all in less time than it takes to tell.

"*Cravache!*" he called out.

I laid the whip on Erraït's rump to fall in step behind Not Much White.

Soon after reaching the far side of the river of sand we started to climb into a maze of rock-strewn hills. Bahh began to sing a slow nasal tune with a rising hum at the end of each phrase. Camels, it is said, are very fond of music, and Bahh was rapidly becoming very fond of the aluminum water bottle I had bought in Algiers. By the time we stopped to rest he couldn't take his eyes off it. He sat fondling the smooth round sides and opening

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and closing the screw-on cap. He made it clear that he needed a canteen in the worst way. Nothing of the sort could be had for hundreds of miles around, and the water being what it was, I firmly intended to drink only my own, generously disinfected with Halazon tablets. I promised to give it to him before I returned to the coast.

"It would be nice for butter," said Bahh.

He cast covetous glances at the water bottle all that afternoon and his singing became peculiarly wistful. The next day he called my attention to the fact that the liquid goat butter had leaked copiously from his ordinary oil can down his camel's flank. This timely coincidence broke my heart. I gave him the bottle and watched him toss out my safe water to replace it eagerly with what was left of his rancid butter.

"Plenty of water in the *guerba*," he said. Yes, but I could hardly risk to arouse his suspicion by slipping mysterious pills in the goatskin bag. From now on I would have to rely on my injections and close my eyes to such visible hazards as manure, drowned insects and camels' hair.

Our provisions consisted of macaroni, dried tomatoes and many pounds of sugar and tea. While our own needs were small, tea and sugar were a necessary cargo for distribution among natives who offered us their hospitality. The macaroni, properly cooked and seasoned, made an excellent soup called *sherba.*

The blinding glare and crushing heat of the day were drastically relieved by cold nights, the temperature frequently dropping fifty degrees in the small hours of the morning. I was a little dubious at first about sleeping on the ground, for wherever there is water, scorpions and horned vipers abound; but Bahh curled up with such complete confidence that I soon stopped worrying. No Targui (singular of Tuareg) ever suffered from insomnia or any other kind of subconscious insecurity.

When we approached the first encampment Bahh shed his white travelling robe and draped himself carefully in his purple *tahra,* a cotton material imported from India which has the quality of carbon paper and stains at the slightest touch. Since the Tuareg never bathe and believe that washing makes them ill, they acquire a dark blue sheen from head to foot that is considered very beautiful.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"*Ourrt!*" called out Bahh. "*Ourrt!*" Our camels lunged forward in a long trot and I could tell by the sharp leering eyes above the veil that I was being put to a test.

Presently the encampment came into full view. A group of men walked slowly toward us wearing the customary *naïls:* sandals extending two inches around the foot to facilitate walking in loose sand. We couched our camels and exchanged greetings over and over again: *Labess,* no evil, and *Hamdullah,* praise to God.

They were nobles of the Kel Rela tribe who now conducted us to a tent presided over by a veritable *grande dame* of refined features and great dignity: the perfect example of a matriarch. After inviting me to be seated on the rug the men slipped off their sandals and entered the tent to start within our circle a small fire of roots for the preparation of tea. The tent was clean and airy. There were saddles and leather traveling bags; swords, guns and daggers hung from the supporting posts. There was no shouting, no confusion, and no one asked me how I happened to be there, where I had come from or where I was going. As far as I could follow it the conversation was about my water- (now butter-) bottle, which passed from hand to hand amidst the undivided admiration of those present. Bahh had stepped out of the tent. He returned carrying a handsome old Sudanese bowl and carved spoon.

"This is for you," he said. "Come, I show you something."

In a depression a short distance away from camp some of the tribesmen had thrown a male camel on its side. The forefeet were hobbled, the hindfeet tied and stretched out by a man pulling at the other end of the rope. One native lay on the animal's belly, another on its neck, a third held down the snarling head. It looked like the capture of a prehistoric monster. One of the veiled men drew his dagger and proceeded to operate, deftly timing each stroke of the knife to the short intervals between the animal's convulsions. Red to the elbows, deaf to the hoarse groans of agony, he calmly carved away the bleeding viscera and plunged his hand into the livid flesh to extricate the spermatic cord. Not a word was spoken among the men, only Bahh turned to me in explanation.

"Amahli is very hard to handle. We make him *indhá.*"

A handful of sand was thrown on the wound and the animal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

untied and allowed to kneel. Then Bahh put his saddle in place, mounted, and the howling white camel strode into the sunset, its hindquarters covered with running blood.

The Tuareg eat when they are hungry, at any time it pleases them: in the afternoon, in the evening, or at two o'clock in the morning. The thud-thud of the women pounding sorghum had been going on all the while. A fire was blazing under a large pot outside of a nearby tent.

My rudimentary knowledge of the language was a barrier to closer understanding, to be sure, but their ability at once to comprehend an inference of gesture or expression helped substantially to overcome this handicap. My eagerness to learn a few essential phrases of Tamachec pleased them, and my use of it made their hard eyes melt with laughter. One of the men began to tap on an upturned brass receptacle. There were yelps of gaiety when I joined them in the sharply punctuated chant. Silently, gracefully, visitors came and went, the kind of people who never jostle each other, never step on one's feet in a crowd.

Later a Negro brought two steaming bowls of food, cereal in the one and great hunks of meat in the other. We each took one of the wooden spoons from the top of the cereal bowl, swallowed a mouthful, and stuck the spoon back with the handle pointing out.

"Dig deeper!" my neighbor urged me, handing me a choice piece of mutton. Most of the precious rancid butter had sunk to the bottom of the bowl. The meat was tender and delicious, its flavor in no way impaired by the liberal dose of sand which is a standard adjunct to desert cuisine.

When we had finished I decided to perform what I had hoped would be recognized as another example of white man's magic. I had brought with me several packages of pudding powder which requires no cooking. Knowing how fond the Tuareg are of sweets I felt convinced that this would meet with their approval. I confidently measured out two cups of goats' milk, stirred the powder into it, tasted the delightful mixture and handed it to my host. He politely dipped the tip of his spoon into it and licked it stoically, pronouncing judgement with a word I didn't understand but which, unmistakingly, meant thumbs down, for all the rest of them declined. They were afraid of magic, even sweet. My ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

periment had failed. At this critical moment Bahh returned. It was eleven-thirty. He had ridden the freshly castrated camel steadily for four hours. He said it was fine.

The next day I noticed that the Negro had salvaged the wrapper of the pudding powder. He had carefully divided it and wore the two printed sides as decorations in his turban, from which they stuck out like little wings.

Lazy as they are, the Tuareg of the Hoggar keep their tents in good order and free from the nauseating odors and unsanitary conditions prevailing in most of the Saharan hotels. For all the ever-changing camps and passing caravans a traveler can ride for weeks across the desert without seeing any trash or refuse. The natives urinate kneeling and always cover up their tracks. Only death leaves its wreckage in the sand.

When receiving a visitor the master of a tent is expected to take three steps forward. In the dark, when it is impossible to recognize even a friend completely wrapped in blue, a Targui will offer his greeting and obligingly mention his name. Like their parents, the children speak in soft undertones. They are generally very good-looking, but it is a serious breach of etiquette to say so outright, for to call someone's child beautiful is tantamount to giving it the evil eye. The safe way to pay such a compliment is to say that the child is pleasing. In courting one of the lithe and comely girls the approach is even more indirect. The proper time for it is during an *ahal*, a musical and literary gathering. Flirting is not done face to face. A young man gradually closes in on the lady of his choice until he finds the moment propitious to sit behind her. During the next hour or so he patiently waits for a sign of encouragement. Should none be forthcoming, he simply moves away again, but if the lady is well-disposed, he may whisper in her ear that his camel is couched near a certain thornbush. If this announcement has the desired effect, the girl will literally lean over backward and permit her lover to inhale the breath of her nostrils, and if she is inclined to go beyond this voluptuous introduction, she may then and there whisper back to him that she would like to park her camel next to his. Under the thornbush, of course, the subterfuge ends.

Despite his idiosyncrasies, blessed with a marvelous capacity for repose and entirely free from our adulation of facts and figures,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Targui has achieved a throughly integrated way of life in marked contrast to our own, which is to such a large extent a series of expediencies and maladjustments. In our cities people tear through breakfast, catch a taxi, hurry to the office, grab a bite to eat, rush to an appointment as if business cum chattering ticker tape and jangling telephones were more important than life itself. In the evening, too rattled for sex, they escape from themselves amidst the unrealities of a movie. They erect skyscrapers and stuff them full of antiques, build enormous factories to manufacture 'home-made' bread, invent television to project cowboys, commercials and murder. Radio and jukebox crooners drool over unrequited love, and news reports are slanted to keep the public jittery and anxious for the next installment of disaster. The common retort to this is that ours is a much more complex civilization, but if we wear ourselves to a frazzle with complications and inanities this very complexity must be a mistake.

In giving information the Tuareg are reliable and precise, not about the exact distance in miles but the time it will require to reach a certain point. This is perfectly reasonable, for ten miles may present more obstacles than a hundred. For practical purposes knowledge of the distance is worthless, whereas an estimate in time covers all existing conditions. A native will look at you and your mount, add to it the nature of the terrain and, taking into consideration attendant circumstances such as weather and the time of day or night, tell you exactly how long it will take you to reach your destination.

If a traveler should get lost, his best guide to immediate safety, the nearest waterhole, would be his camel. Provided there is any water within a radius of twenty miles, a camel is bound to find its way to it. Many men have gone mad in the desert, plagued by hallucinations of sparkling lakes and shady groves. No camel has ever been fooled by a mirage.

Although bones of wild prehistoric species have been found throughout northern Africa, it appears that the domesticated camel was not known there before the sixth century. With the beginning of the Arab invasion in the seventh century, and the much greater influx of the Bedouins in the eleventh, the camel soon became firmly established in its new environment from the Mediterranean to the farthest reaches of the Sahara. The change from the African elephant of the Carthaginians to the use of camels was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

equivalent to an economic revolution, in that it made possible a caravan trade across vast territories which had been impassable.

In spite of its renowned endurance and sobriety an active camel cannot go without water longer than five days during the hot season. Pasturing in ideal circumstances it can stretch days into weeks and even months. A creature born in solitude and accustomed to lean pickings, full of contradictions, extremely sensitive, profoundly misunderstood, it has what is known as "the artistic temperament". The camel is docile and obedient in a contemptuous sort of way, patient and resigned, but when least expected it will flare up at a minor provocation or for no apparent reason at all in violent and disproportionate revolt. At such moments it can be obstreperous to the point of suicide. It will stop in its tracks and no dagger jabs will budge it; it will kneel and rather die than rise again, even if a fire is kindled under it. It will freeze into immobility over a shadow, it will have a fit over a wrinkle in the saddle blanket, but if it steps on a six-inch thorn it will merely stamp its foot until the obstruction is driven in, and keep on walking. When the sole of one of the pads has worn through it is an accepted practice to stitch on anything that is handy. By the time the patch is gone, the foot has very likely healed. More than anything it hates sharp rocks and wet ground. It does not seem to mind the heat but has a very low resistance to humidity. It will turn up its nose at lush green pastures and savor shrubs that have the properties of steel wool. Left to browse in peace, the animal ambles from clump to clump selecting spiny mouthfuls. Then it lies down to digest this prickly entanglement, staring into the distance. It can drink twenty-five gallons of water at one time but perspires very little. Its skin is considerably thicker than cowhide.

All working camels insist on taking six months off each year. No matter how far they may wander during these vacations in their search for nourishment, they never get lost. There are two distinct categories: the pack animal of the caravans, the coarse *djemel,* and the fleet and elegant *méhari,* or riding camel. A pack animal in good condition can carry about five hundred pounds and cover thirty-five miles a day at a rate of four miles per hour. A *méhari* can do much better than that with a lighter load.

The widely accepted notion that riding a camel can cause seasickness is nonsense. It is true that, as a consequence of its char-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

acteristic single-foot gait, there is a slight swaying motion, but I have never known of anyone who has *really* become sick; I have only heard the falsehood repeated by people who never rode a camel. Except in the trot, i.e. a fast pace, riding a *méhari* is less fatiguing than riding a horse. For one thing, it does not demand the same constant attention. A horse's movements are quicker and his inclination to change direction arbitrarily is more pronounced; a camel, and especially a string of camels in a caravan, will follow a set course for hours. The camel does not gallop unless frightened or forced to do so. The nomads practice selective breeding and there are many definite strains. A good *méhari* has a full hump and firm lips; a deep chest; legs well muscled to the knees and lean from there on down to insure a fast and easy gait; a broad head tapering to a narrow muzzle; large eyes with heavy lids and long, dense lashes for protection against sun and sand.

Usually one male is kept to service from fifty to a hundred females. The cows are coy and restless during the rutting season, the bulls extremely fierce. They are intensely jealous of any male that dares to cut in on their harem and will readily launch a merciless fight, each biting the other furiously about the neck and testicles, each trying to throw the other to crush and trample him to death. Often after such battles the female most in heat will kneel beside the victor, who promptly seeks solace in coitus.

The period of gestation is twelve months, the weight and volume of the new-born calf equivalent to that of a full-grown man. It can stand up and totter about after a week and soon makes friends with other calves who form separate little cliques to play and investigate the steel wool pasture. Perhaps this early shock has something to do with their cynical expression.

A year later the calf has its right nostril pierced and the ring inserted to which the guiding rein will be attached. At the age of two it is branded, either with the tribal mark or that of individual ownership. Branding is a custom so ancient that its origin has been lost in the nebulous past of oriental history. It was current in Arabia many centuries before the first invasion of North Africa. Later Arab conquests introduced it to Spain, and via the Spanish migration to North America it eventually became a practice among cattlemen of the Old West in recent years.

The training of young camels takes much gentleness and pa-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tience, for if mishandled at an early age they may remain intractable forever. Teaching them to stay in one place is easy. The rein is simply tied to a foreleg; every time the camel moves there is a painful pull on the nostril. Thus it soon learns to stand still with the rein dropped on the ground. To make it kneel is a little more difficult and takes two at first: the rider, who gives the proper signal, and a man on the ground who strikes the animal's knee at the same time until it learns to couch at the rider's command alone. But it is in teaching it to respond to guidance by pinching its neck with bare toes that the understanding trainer is rewarded in the end by instant obedience to signals that will start, run, slow down, stop, turn or back a well-schooled mount.

Camels hate to be separated from a group and are as conventional as cats in their habits once they get used to a routine; they will lie down in exactly the same place as they have on previous occasions, and pack camels will make a great fuss if they are not placed in their habitual order in the caravan file. They are fully grown at the age of fifteen, useful until they are twenty-two, and would live to forty or fifty if they weren't ordinarily butchered earlier. Not that a few years more or less make any difference in the quality of the meat. No matter how it is prepared, camel is always tough. It has no particular flavor but a pungent odor of old wet leather.

A Targui's first concern in the morning is to reach for his compact to paint his eyes. Using a thorn and starting from the inside corner of the eye, he dexterously applies the pitch-black *dazould*, a viscous powder made of ground stone, to the pink conjunctiva of the lid. This accentuates the white of the eyeballs and makes the eyes appear exceedingly bright. It does not indicate that the Tuareg are sissies! Far from it. In deference to their paradoxical vanity be it said that the application of the cosmetic is also believed to prevent ophthalmia.

Bahh was having his head shaved. He unwound the six yards of purple cloth that covered his face and head, a most unusual thing to do in the presence of a stranger and, in a sense, a subtle compliment to a visitor's discretion. A request to photograph him undisguised would have drawn instant refusal; an attempt to take a picture of him on the sly could have had serious conse-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quences and barred me from any further association with his people. It was obviously his conviction that I would not embarrass him by such a *faux pas* that put him at his ease. He had a handsome, sensitive face, blue lips and dusky skin. Fazzi, a Sudanese, was in attendance as the barber. Dagger in hand, he cleared the cranium of all hair that had grown since the last treatment from the forehead back, leaving intact only a small patch of long hair with three meticulously braided pigtails. An amulet in a flat pouch remained untouched on the top of Bahh's head. When the job was done to his satisfaction he took the veil between his teeth and wound it across his face and about his head again, the end falling loosely over his shoulders. Then he touched up his eyebrows, strapped on his sword, hitched his saddle bags to the *rahla* and rode off into the void.

At harvest time the nobles everywhere break camp to move closer to the agricultural centers to claim their share. In their role as incorruptible nomads they hold that "shame enters with the plow" and know in advance that they will be cheated. The Harratin, on the other hand, are clever enough never to abuse the arrogance of their masters and only cheat up to a certain point. This astute balance of respect and tolerance is the basis of a happy relationship. There is not the slightest sign of oppression on the part of the masters and no indication of servility in the behavior of the Harratin.

Before the sun rose, Hammah, Ptiha, Adebbera and others mounted their *méhara* and, Fazzi and I bringing up the rear, we followed a faint trail of camel droppings across a sandy plain. During the noon hours we unsaddled and hobbled the camels, propped up swords and rifles in the *rahlas* and tied blankets over the structure as a temporary shelter from the blazing sun. Fazzi, magnificent in his shabby turquoise rags, started a fire, unpacked the tea things and set about preparing *kesra*, the bread of the Tuareg. Mixing the coarse flour with the muddy water from the goatskin, he shaped the dough into a flat cake two inches thick. This he placed directly on the coals. The underside cooked to a firm consistency, the soft upper surface absorbed every grain of blowing sand. Then he turned the cake over. Retrieving it from the fire, he rinsed it off casually, scraped the black crust of coals from both sides, broke it in pieces and placed it before us in a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wooden bowl. Dipped in liquid goat butter, it was oddly appropriate and palatable.

As we traveled in a southwesterly direction the character of the country began to change. The sandy depressions gave way to regions of pierced and hollowed boulders of incredible dimensions that looked as if a giant Henry Moore had fashioned them in a creative frenzy over a period of a thousand years. It was hard to believe that nature, by sheer accident, could produce monuments so incongruously sculptural. Here and there enormous heaps of rock suggested the effort of a mighty helper who had tried to put this chaotic workshop in order. It was all a little out of focus in the heat; only things at close range persisted in exaggerated sharpness: the dense carpet of flies on the shady side of every rider, the bright blue lizards standing bow-legged on the black rocks, the fat ticks tumbling along the camels' flanks in their strange spasmodic way of locomotion.

When we were once more on open ground a group of riders approached, right hand held up Indian fashion in friendly greeting; a Dagh Rahli noble and his retainers. Swathed from head to foot in indigo and mounted on a superb white *méhari,* he sidled up to our camels to rub palms with us. After countless mutual assurances that there was indeed no evil, praise to God, he was about to dismount when his camel started to act up. The close proximity of the females we were riding was too much for his fine *khimbar,* a breed famous for its beauty and endowed with blue eyes and three perfectly matched fur buttons evenly spaced in a row on the ridge of the nose. A bubble-shaped mucous membrane, the size of a large fist, which issues from the mouth of male camels during the mating season, hung quivering from the left side of the animal's lips. Roaring defiantly when the Dagh Rahli reached forward to grab its nose, rumbling inside, foaming at the mouth and shedding water, the frustrated beast whirled and plunged about and wildly stamped its feet while the strong neck writhed and twisted like a tortured snake. Enveloped in a thick cloud of dust, his garments billowing, the rider managed to keep his seat, but our camels were alarmed. With the greatest difficulty the frantic *khimbar* was brought sufficiently under control by his master to be headed off in the right direction. The rest of the cortege followed solemnly, including two Negroes, perched on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the very rear ends of their donkeys, who were driving a few broadtail sheep. Fazzi looked at the sheep admiringly and remarked with the voice of the connoisseur: *"Il y'en a de la graisse bien ça le mouton beaucoup!"*

On waking in the morning we would often find that two or three tribesmen had joined our company during the night. They were never heard or seen when they arrived. Usually they had come from a place that was identified by no more than a legend, and were bound for a destination obscurely related to a past event. A peculiar methodical aimlessness governed their wanderings and spurred them on in the four directions of the compass along a network of invisible trails of which the cardinal points were the waterholes. They barely opened their mouths, but in an atmosphere of perfect harmony they would share our tea or bid us to their fire, pack their camels unhurriedly and ride away.

At last the monotony of volcanic devastation was relieved by a strip of vegetation as we came within sight of a settlement of Harratin.[1] Some of the Negroes stepped out of their *zeribas* (round huts made of long, tough grass) to await our arrival. One fellow with a winning grin invited us into his miniature patio, an enclosure that extended in a semi-circle around the entrance to the hut. Here we left our saddles and other equipment and, with many mutual affirmations that evil had been banished from the earth and everyone was in the best of health, presented a good measure of sugar and tea. The women were discreetly curious and shy in a demure way. Tiny as it was, the hut was divided by a grass partition into "parlor" and bedroom. One of the women brought a pathetic little rug for me to sit on, and Salach, still grinning, scooped a hole out of the sand in the middle of the floor to lay a fire. Fazzi, playing man-of-the-world, made a deep impression speaking French to me and interpreting with so many embellishments that our host was spellbound. To the Harratin all foreigners were Swiss, because the year before a gentleman from Zurich had stopped among them to recuperate from exposure. He had left as a gift an elegant wristwatch, which now only ticked for a few seconds when knocked against a rock or someone's head.

[1]Singular: Hartani.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The Swiss," explained Fazzi, "he was always thirsty. The heat, she was too much for him. The face, he was very red. The feet, he was swollen like this, all blisters. Camels, he never want to see them again. The Mirican, he can take it, *gyddygyd*."

"Well," I told them, not meaning to boast, "I come from Arizona where there is also great heat *beaucoup*. The unfortunate Swiss was not used to such an extreme climate as this. Most of the time his country is buried in snow. Here, look at this picture; we grow dates in my country like the Arabs do in the north."[2]

They studied the picture of the Arizona date palms, planted in neat rows and bearing voluminous bunches of red fruit under the crowns. What puzzled them were the girls who swarmed up the ladders in sunsuits and high heels. They were hardly the type to climb trees and they weren't even veiled like Arab women. As for the snows of Switzerland, that had them completely buffaloed.

Our circle was widening as more of the Harratin quietly slipped into the hut. After the tea a large bowl of goatmeat and *bechena* (cooked cereal) was served. Then Salach brought out his bamboo flute to play a plaintive fugue. To revive the fire he reached behind from time to time to pluck a handful of the dry blades of grass from the wall of the hut. In the middle of the musicale one of the black women, holding a baby in her arms, peeked through the break in the partition. Upon seeing the white bogeyman the baby shrieked in uncontrollable fright. The mother patted her child affectionately on the behind and retreated with a wry smile. When the party broke up, Fazzi went to sleep in the enclosure outside. I had been given the run of the place, so to speak. The fire still glimmered in the hollow of sand and the only sound till morning was the staccato bark of a jackal.

Our points of repair were never anything that had a concrete meaning, never anything that was marked on a map. There were scenes of ribbed spires and phallic cones, shapely dunes floating in mid-air far off in another dimension, black slabs of rock spreading fanwise out of the ground. There were nightmares solidified in lava, monstrous panoramas of all the symbols of obscenity, and always, intermittently, broad troughs of sand.

On the level stretches we jogged along at a fast pace. The ex-

[2]There are no oases south of In Salah in the central desert.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hilaration of the brisk movement invariably made Fazzi sing after the manner of warriors who ride in a "carousel", when the women play their single-stringed violins and the men trot their caparisoned camels around them in perfect rhythm to the music.

Leh hamiee-ne wan-i leh hamah
Leh hamiee-ne wan-i leh hamah. . .

It was just getting dark when we came upon a crowd of dancers swaying and weaving in a cloud of dust, the men on the inside, the women forming an outer circle. To the accompaniment of several flutes, half a dozen tom-toms beat in counter-rhythm to the booming of a much larger drum. With intricate steps the dancers moved forward and backward and inter-twined, hesitated and turned with upheld arms. Occasionally the husky chanting was dominated by a single falsetto voice: "He has returned . . . he has returned. . . ." The graceful black women with buttered hair and bright yellow spots on their cheeks slithered about rolling their hips. They wore large silver loops in their ears and their braids were bound with copper wire and studded with shining ornaments. At intervals the men took a few puffs from slender pipes that had three brass rings hanging from the bottom of the bowl. Hour after hour the sound and the movement flowed on in a smooth and beguiling hashish trance, the dust and the darkness soon hiding all but the gleam of white teeth or the faint flash of a jewel. The high-pitched solo voices were answered by the chorus: "He has returned . . . he has returned. . . ." Who? Whence? They didn't say and it didn't matter. It was incentive enough to make them sing and dance. The phrase was repeated again and again, yet the chant never lagged; it expressed so many fine shades of joy. The musicians who produced this spell were inversely so affected by it that they, in turn, became the instruments of a compelling force which acted upon them like a powerful intoxicant and urged them on to ever more ethereal modulations and wilder frenzy, while the dancers responded ecstatically, imbued as they were with the pleasant event, absorbed in the complicated rhythm. They themselves were joy and rhythm, the physical projection of a happy thought, the consummation of a rapture that thrived on their sensuous energy until it finally drifted away into the night along with the dust and the acrid smoke of *kif*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The next day the desert was silent again and it was hard to believe that it could ever generate anything other than a hot and hostile inertia.

We were sitting in the middle of a dry wash, boiling water for tea. Fazzi heaved a stone at the nearest thornbush to drive away the evil spirits who lurk in such places to vex the traveler.

"The mint," he said, "we have him no more."

Upon seeing my disappointment he looked around and, after examining the sparse vegetation, picked a handful of minute grey stalks. He crushed them in his hand and dropped the brittle fragments into the pot. The wonderfully aromatic plant, called *dinharh,* had an exquisite flavor and proved once again the constant contradiction of indigence and refinement so characteristic of the nomad. Nor was this the only contradiction. The Tuareg carried all their possessions in leather bags. Those containing valuables they would lock with their native *cadenas,* three keys sometimes being required to work the combination. The system seemed singularly ineffectual as a measure of precaution because every man carried a dagger and anyone who so desired could ignore the lock and slash the leather bag. But no one thought of doing this. The lock was universally respected as a symbol of privacy.

Without looking up, Fazzi announced: "You hear something? The people, they are coming right now, soon."

I couldn't hear or see a thing; nothing moved in the yellow emptiness.

"Two riders, over there."

Now I could barely recognize a feeble vapor rising from the ground to the south.

"Bahh and Marahli."

So it was; Bahh on a creamy-white *méhari* that had a tassel three feet long swinging from its right shoulder, Marahli on a splendid black mount. After the ritual of greeting Bahh stretched his blue legs and sang a muffled, quavering tune. In due time he revealed that he had been in the encampment of the supreme chief.

"The Amenokal," he said with a twinkle in his eye, "he wants to meet the polite stranger who can run a camel. He has put off breaking camp to receive you; three days' ride from here. Fazzi knows the way."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I told him how much I appreciated his speaking favorably of me, and that I was honored by the Amenokal's invitation. He smiled and implied with a grand gesture: the Sahara is yours. Marahli sat with black unblinking eyes, a moody and somnolent fellow with a coiled spring inside.

At dawn we parted company. The black and white camel turned east, Fazzi and I climbed toward a jagged ridge in the opposite direction. Zig-zagging and doubling back through rocks we came upon a waterhole fringed by palms and guarded by a swarm of fierce insects. A young black girl came dancing from behind a boulder with a string of donkeys to fetch water for an encampment, highly amused to find a white civilian on her beat. Fazzi had a hard time keeping up with her cooing and bubbling. I asked him to find out if she knew of any inscriptions or pictographs in the vicinity.

"Yes," he interpreted, "she says there are plenty, all over the rocks and on her belly, too."

We filled our goatskins and helped replenish hers. This so delighted her that, with a show of artful coquetry, she indicated how welcome we were to enjoy all she had to offer.

"The girl," said Fazzi, "if you don't want to make love to her, she would like you to give her something anyway."

"A cigarette, for instance?"

"*Gyddygyd.*"

I gave her three and she gaily waved us on our way.

Once, in a crowded city, a man bumped into me coming around a corner. He didn't apologize in the ordinary way. Before he hurried on, he stopped for a moment and said in dismay: "Ah, too many of us! Too many of us!"

Here, wind, sand and space merged into an absolute that could not be measured by the standards of our familiar world. There were so very few people at any given point at any certain time.

We traversed an area of dusty clumps of shrubbery. The Amenokal's camp lay ahead somewhere in the blue haze on the edge of infinity. It occurred to me the next morning that it might be in order to address the chief in Tamachec. I asked Fazzi: "What can I say to the Amenokal to please him when we arrive in his camp?"

"Anything you like," he said. "If you want to make him happy, you tell him: *Nak dewair salis hwadewa y djerarh ad-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dounedh hyieren houlan arrech abbadah idiss deedawah abbadah."

"Are you sure that is the thing to say?"

"Yes, he will be pleased *beaucoup*. You speak to him in Tamachec, I tell you what he says after that."

I became so engrossed in perfecting my pronunciation that I forgot to ask him about the meaning of the words, and then a number of tents appeared among the boulders at the foot of a hill.

"This is Emmekhenni," said Fazzi.

At high noon it was the center of a furnace. Nobody paid any attention to us as we unsaddled our camels. A few men stalked about as if they were walking in their sleep. Obviously, no one was going to acknowledge our presence before the chief had done us the honor. A black girl brought a fine rug and spread it carefully on the sand. I felt more exposed on it than sitting on the ground, but Fazzi insisted that desert etiquette demanded such decorum. The sun was almost unbearable and the flies were so thick that only extreme fatalism could put up with them. At last a group of dignitaries, the Amenokal in front, came walking down the hillside at a slow, studied pace. I stepped forward and we all rubbed palms. The chief bade me be seated again on the rug where he joined me; his entourage of twenty nobles sat down in a row behind him in the sand. Dizzy as I was from the heat, the ordeal of being subjected to a severe scrutiny by a gimlet-eyed congregation of veiled men made me feel a bit queasy.

I had been told that, more than anything, Amenokal Baï disliked nervous, impatient, fidgety people; quick, restless gestures; unnecessary noise, and anyone who was stupid enough to be in a hurry. Like all his nobles he was superbly aristocratic; a large, portly man with tapering hands and eagle eyes, immaculate in an apricot-colored robe and white veil. He waited for me to open the session. Now was the time to say my piece in Tamachec.

It was received in dead silence. Somehow they seemed more dumbfounded than pleased; or perhaps they were not disposed to show their emotion? Their austerity nearly made me lose my composure.

"Fazzi," I said, "please tell the Amenokal that I sincerely appreciate his invitation and that I am very happy to be among the Tuareg."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This was met by a murmur of approval.

A Negro deposited a wooden box near the rug and the chief's lieutenant made a fire and set glasses and pots about him in the sand. While we sipped the piping hot mint tea a bevy of black women filed past carrying poles, bales and rocks on their heads. A little way down the slope they started to put up a tent. Their slow, precise movements looked more like a ballet routine than hard work.

During this first encounter conversation was limited to an exchange of courtesies, one of which misfired due to Fazzi's interpreting.

"The Amenokal," he said, "he has the tent put up for you."

I expressed my admiration for it and was surprised that there was so much comment after Fazzi got through translating. I was aware that he was talking too much but couldn't understand what the hubbub was all about. Finally he stopped long enough to tell me: "The Amenokal, he says the tent is not for sale."

"For sale? I had no intention of buying it! What in hell did you tell him? Fazzi, I don't want you to make things up! I couldn't afford to buy it even if I wanted to, but don't mention that. Tell him that I meant to say how much I liked it — and don't cross me up again, *tu comprends?*"

This time he got it straight and my firm attitude must have appealed to the chief because something almost like a smile sparkled in his eyes for an instant. He rose, slipped on his sandals, and all the nobles got up to follow him. Fazzi and I moved into the tent.

"By the way," I said, "my speech fell rather flat. What, exactly, did it mean?"

"You tell him," said Fazzi brightly: "*Et moi, je suis content avec ça les types parceque j'y vois les types; et moi, quand je trouve, je marche avec toi tous les jours parceque j'ai gagné par la tête.*"[3]

His intentions were perfectly good; the trouble was with the way his mind worked. Coming from a distinguished visitor, the response of the Amenokal and his nobles to a greeting phrased in

[3]"I am glad to be with you guys because I wanted to meet you guys; and me, when I find out where you are, I travel with you day after day because I am learning something every minute."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the cocky familiarity of the underdog was naturally negative. However, far from being offended, they understood my predicament and judged my behavior by the intrinsic respect I showed them. They undoubtedly felt that my visit was motivated by genuine interest. They derived very little profit from my presence and their confidence could not be bought with a few pounds of sugar and tea.

The tent was made of sixty goatskins, tanned a rich rust color and decorated with leather tassels. The main posts were carved around the top and stood about five feet and a half at the highest point. The sides sloped down in two graceful dips to lower supports and from there to the ground where the edges were lashed to rocks with leather thongs. It was open toward the east; two strong fiber mats extended at right angles from the entrance as windbreaks. The back flap could be let down or lifted up and thrown over the top to allow maximum ventilation. A heavy rug was spread inside.

We were left alone the rest of the day. It was pleasant to relax in the shade, sheltered from the glare of the desert. Toward evening the Negro brought a large foaming bowl of camel's milk, fresh and sweet with a delicate almond flavor. There was never a harsh voice, never a bawling child; only once a minor commotion occurred outside when someone killed a horned viper that had lain hidden in the sand.

Next morning, in the crystal-clear air, hundreds upon hundreds of pure-bred camels with their little ones came swaying ponderously over a knoll on the edge of the encampment, raising a prodigious cloud of dust. When one of the calves strayed from the herd, its mother would break into a run with outstretched neck and bring it back to the fold, gurgling and groaning in maternal rebuke.

Amenokal Baï's second visit was less formal than the initial reception. This time he came as a friend. Ten of the nobles entered the tent with him. Fazzi brewed the tea. It so happened that my bedroll lay behind Baï and I could see that he was puzzled by it. I spread it out and gave a demonstration. This made a much better impression than the pudding powder. What fascinated him most was the zipper. Fazzi, the expert on foreign matters, answered all questions and put on a blasé air as if he had invented this miracle of convenience. Zippers were really a bit boring, you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

know, when you were surrounded by them every day. But the Amenokal didn't think so. He pulled the slide partway down the track, studied the effect, quickly pulled it up again, slowly pulled it down a little farther than before and back as fast as lightning to the starting point.

"Are there many of these?" he asked.

"Yes, in my country they are made in great quantities, like goatskin water bags in the Sahara."

Fazzi took about ten minutes to put this across, probably with sundry metaphysical explanations of all the goblins involved in the manufacture and operation of the mechanism and some skeptical remarks about its durability and ultimate worth. After all, so many trucks broke down, so many airplanes crashed; it was reasonable to assume that most zippers got stuck sooner or later.

The Amenokal was still interested enough to ask if it had come from far away. This was his prudent method of finding out where I had come from—since he could not be so crude as to ask me outright—apart from gaining a clue to the geographical position of Zipperland.

"It comes from the interior of America," I said, "nearly ten thousand miles away, across a big sea."

They had vaguely heard of Mirica, but the distance made no sense to them.

I said: "*Maya! Maya!* Much, much water!"

They couldn't conceive of that much water.

Then I had an idea. I made a rough calculation.

"Fazzi," I said, "tell them that, if I had ridden a camel all the way, it would have taken me two hundred and eighty days to come here."

They were utterly amazed. Everybody talked at once.

With a mentality that constantly fluctuated between fancy and reality they did not differentiate between fact and hypothesis and made themselves believe that I had indeed performed the astounding feat of traveling the entire distance by camel. Two hundred and eighty days! It took only twenty days to Timbuctoo!

When the flurry had subsided the Amenokal asked searchingly: "Are there any Tuareg in Mirica?"

"No," I had to admit, shuddering at the thought of veiled blue warriors on Fifth Avenue.

I knew that Amenokal Baï had consistently refused to be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

photographed. To my surprise he not only consented to let me take his picture but showed me the courtesy of lowering his veil to the tip of his nose.

A hundred years ago a renegade member of the Hoggar tribe, who had expatriated himself among the Arabs, said: "If you accept a Targui's hospitality, you have nothing to fear from him under his tent or after you have left, but he will notify his friends who will kill you and divide your possessions."

Yet a military man, the gracious General Daumas, was convinced in 1853 that "If you are under the protection of one, you will be safeguarded by all. You will be admirably received. You will suffer no want: the Targui will go hungry but offer you food, he will not drink but give you water, he will risk his life to save yours."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDWIN MUIR

Sonnet

I who so carefully keep in such repair
The six-inch king and the toy treasury,
Prince, poet, realm withered in time's black air,—
I am not, although I seem, an antiquary.

For this scant-acre kingdom is not dead,
Nor save in seeming shrunk. When at its gate,
Which you pass daily, you incline your head
And enter (no need to knock; it keeps no state),

You will be with space and order magistral,
And that contracted world so vast will grow
That this will seem a little tangled field.
For you will be in very truth with all
In their due rank and honour, row on row.—
For this I read the emblem on the shield.

Two Songs

I

Leave, leave your well-loved nest,
Late swallow, and fly away.
Here is no rest
For hollowing heart and wearying wing.
Your comrades all have flown
To seek their southern paradise
Across the great earth's downward sloping side,
And you are alone.
Why should you cling
Still to the swiftly ageing narrowing day?
Prepare;
Shake out your pinions long untried

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That now must bear you there where you would be
Through all the heavens of ice,
Till falling down the homing air
You light and perch upon the radiant tree.

II

This will not pass so soon,
Dear friend, this will not pass,
Though time is out of tune
With all beneath the moon,
Man and woman and flower and grass.
For there's a word "Return"
That's known among the quick and dead,
Making two realms for ever call and mourn.
So mourns the land of darkness when
Into the light away the lily is led,
And so gives thanks again
When from the earth the snow-pale beauty goes
Back to her home. Persephone,
Surely all this can only be
A light exchange and amorous interplay
In your strange twofold immortality,
And a diversion for a summer day
The death and resurrection of the rose.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PATRICIA COOMBS

Reflections in Space

Indifferent, we stand apart and thus
Assume these figures as ourselves: half
Silence and half metaphor who walk beside
A morning sea with hands like shells.
And from the white hotel the second gull
Descends from purest distance into light.

It is an idea, and as idea must include
Mind and mind's neglected landscapes
Of the flesh—must move, as players move
Within drowned theatres of the sea: dark
Figures masked with weeds whose gestures
Form that darker pantomime of our belief.

Noon is an island, unfinished as reality:
Through copper leaves blue cocks strut
Upon a balustrade, gazing at their reflection
In the mineral sea; yet, as they gaze,
Their likeness does not change. Green
With distance, the sea reflects an attitude.

A boat passes through the mind, water
Dripping from a poised oar. Attention
Glitters at the edge of space as light
Against light balances all the intricate
Structures of the air, sinking in silent weeds.
In this shadow swim the primitive fish.

Grown whiter with imagining, a white hotel
Moves without distance from the shore; pure
Visitors, transparent in that light, stroll
Across marble terraces eating grapes and
Quinces from a bowl—this, the morning offering
Brought by the blind and white-winged gulls.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Among the dark and elegiac rocks swim
The shadowed syllables of fish; the stiff,
Rhetorical crab that climbs side-ways from
The sea, tangled by black garlands, thick
Shells of grief. Leaves in that water
Wither and decay: the narrow tree unchanged.

Death, as the end of meaning, gives meaning
Back to what is left, mirrored in absence—
To voices, blown like birds across the sky,
To those drowned promontories, gone like
A gesture from the hand. Indifference,
This white hotel reflected in eternity.

Winter Solstice

1

They stood together where they met, figures,
Two figures in grey space—travellers
Whose speech birds had known, and
Understood. Their feet were bare
Against the splintered boards; their hands
Were cold against the cloth. One said,
We are those in whom silence is a wound,
And the wound a center. The other
Spoke of visions, of dream, an empty shoe.

2

Look now, he cried, toward the land behind us:
Earth seems an error, slower than reptiles,
Older than light. Those weeds are wrong.
The shore is an ancient woman bearing
Winter branches on her back. Centuries
Touch the stone upon her tongue, then drop,
And still she waits. Around her, speech
Slowly stiffens as memory goes down.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

3

The other, who had loved her, bent down
Upon his staff: she has fished for the moon
With a broken thread, lighted the fires
Of need. All night she steals from wreckage
Barnacled oars and a wooden star. Crooked,
Evil, maimed, I have seen them come: one
From the blackened village, two
From the salt-white town, bringing her herbs
And simples, the dried roots of love.

4

A freighter passed them, headed north;
They stood alone, grey figures in grey
Space. We are, said one, those whom
Even the birds forsake. They watched a fish
Jump upward, the red sun falling from his mouth:
His eyes were upon them as he drowned. Tomorrow,
They said, tomorrow is a mountain from which
All gods have fled. The clouds seem old.

5

Far off, the earth seems dark and small;
Because of silence, we meet and speak.
The dead are last to leave—living
They climbed the wooden hills and carved out
Animals for luck, each day an offering
Left beside the grave. The sun is hung
Above the empty shed; inside,
The oarlocks of a second journey rust.

6

The sea was still around them, figures
Sharp against grey space. Behind them
On the shore, an ancient woman cuts the eye
Of winter from a rock; from crevices of dream
She draws the famished serpent to her breast
And silences the bird. Beyond the grey,
Distorted peaks, the travellers had gone.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

3 Circles and a Stone

1

Mountains, abrupt against the eye,
Dissolve below the mind;
Blue processions move and pass,
Their shadow following
Beneath the ice, as all
The fire of summer leaps
From hymns of snow
Around the distant altar. Tips
Of speech glitter in the sun
And far below, drawn
By the shadowed rhetoric of the wood,
Someone lifts a branch and feels the cold
And golden berries touch his skin.
Another, nearer, blows
The pigeons from a tree and sees,
Above the fields' green threshold,
The ordinary miracle of wings.

2

Seasons move over the land, one
By one, move and enter an arc of sky.
A twig sings to attending leaves;
And though it seems to question,
The pause is for another breath
Not an answering.
Each evasion of the stream
Distorts the thing in mind:
The bird reflected, the fish half-seen
Are one: the eye becomes a leaf
Brought back each morning from the sea.
Among the distant pinnacles,
Through depths of some imagined light
Blue-robed figures move and speak
And make of birds a garland
For the pool.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

3

The mountain silences the wood.
Those for whom death had regions, holiness
A face, left no footprint where they passed
Unbroken over earth and moss
Or stood in shadow under slanted trees.
The wood unfurls and folds
Upon itself, even as the eye,
Grown narrow in the sun,
Spreads its liquid darkness to reflect
A darker scene beyond—a theatre,
So intricately still, birds circle downward
Without fear, slowly
Through the lighted arches.
From balconies of ice and snow
The blue processions come,
Bearing the head of summer
On a pole.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LOUIS O. COXE

Marsh Hawk

Before dew falls and dark has clutched horizon
He comes, tilting with shadow, from his marsh,
Cruising the meadow, stooping and all vision
For white-footed mice a-scuttle under slash.

Late vetch, Queen Anne's lace, soiled yarrow
Stand still beneath the shudder of his flight.
His brownness merges into bay and alder—
Death in the vein of evening bringing night.

Curved now like space, as the cove curves to the water,
His talons creep with hunger while the cruel
Mandibles flicker to the ghost of savor
And the eyes throw light as frozen as a jewel.

He homes in on the fear that sweats the weather
A perfect bearing in a strike of blood
Griping within its purchase night and hunger,
The cast of shade, the certain ebb and flood.

Hannah Dustin

(*The statue in Pennacook, N. H.*)

The red veins in the Gravensteins
Started before the frost. I felt
Desire move my blood where vines
And trees hid fruit I only smelt.

That day when windfalls cost me dear
The Indian devilled in his stain
Caught up my solitude. His fire
Ran on my house-eaves dense as rain.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Across the bush he dragged my hate
The miles of Merrimac to north,
Where captives styed like pigs were bait
To tempt our kin and vengeance forth.

I would not weep though he splashed out
My child's brains on a beech's root:
God mocks the mockers. With each gout
Bright on the bark I tasted fruit.

And let the red man drink his night,
Myself unfearing. Fear had laced
His liquor had he known how tight
I filled with poison for his taste.

Drunken he pressed me where he heaped
The bed of boughs. When lust griped hard
I felt his knife, unmanned him, reaped
And sickled through his groin like lard;

His heart leapt once. I struck him there,
Blood ran like fire on my breast:
I walked and felt the dark for hair
Sliming my hands. I scalped the rest

And lashing the lids about my thighs
Fled naked to the boat alone.
The years have run me down. I rise
In passion frozen to a stone.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GEORGE P. ELLIOTT

Miss Cudahy of Stowes Landing

1.

BINGHAM COULD NOT KNOCK AT A STRANGE DOOR without a sense of adventure; to greet, and win if he could, whatever smiling or screw-eyed or blank stranger the door opened onto made his heart beat a little faster, his breath come shorter. In the course of his duties with the Superior Court, he met very few new people, most of whom were lawyers or their secretaries; he liked the fact that in the manner of their official dealings lawyers still wear wigs, but he made no friends among them. He had a few acquaintances and family friends, and another friend, a woman, whom he might have married several years before but did not. Nearly every door he knocked at he had knocked at a hundred times before, except for the doors of old houses, which held his happiness.

Therefore, when one Saturday in early summer he knocked at Miss Cudahy's house in Stowes Landing and no one answered, he gratefully set about inspecting the exterior of the house with the attention it deserved. The telephone operator—in one of these small towns she is the central intelligence—had given him Miss Cudahy's name and had volunteered him the information that she was old, suffered from rheumatism, and was very much the lady. He could see from the outside of the house that the operator had been right; only a lady would befit this grandest house in town, only a lady would have maintained it so handsomely against the sea-weather of Mendocino, only a lady would have kept a marble bird-bath in the garden, a Latin sun-dial under that usually overcast sky, a bronze stark-naked well-patinaed faun in a Concord arbor.

For although he was not sure of the rose-window over the door, yet the dormer windows, the overhang, the complication of the roof, the five gables, these meant to him New England on a hostile coast. Stowes Landing had been built seventy years ago on the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

flats back from a 300-foot cliff, north above a logging stream; the meadows stretched freely back for a mile to the line of forest and descending hills; nothing protected the houses from the sea-breeze but a hedge for those that planted one: and yet Miss Cudahy's house stood two and a half stories tall and massive, like some determined New Englanders bunched together, suspicious and prepared, resisting whatever the Indians, Spaniards, Mexicans, Russians, Southerners, Middle-Westerners, Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Africans, Italians, Armenians, of this dangerous land might have settled among themselves heathenishly to do. That was all right, what one expected, for 1880; but to find it so purely preserved, still yellow with green shutters, in these provinces of light stucco or stained wood, to be able to walk up to it behind its hedge in a legitimate because pure curiosity, that affected Bingham as strongly as some people are affected by shaking the hand that shook the hand of Lincoln. He was more excited, as he began his tour, than was altogether reasonable.

On the southern side of the house, the side where the hedge was only twenty feet tall, he found a grizzled little man leaning on the handle of a shovel. His stance and dull stare bespoke one who has worked hard and learned how to rest like a horse standing up; but there was no new-turned bed, no deep hole, only a small cleared space where he was probably going to plant a fuchsia, there being already sixty or seventy fuchsias about the garden.

"Hello," said Bingham. The man did not respond; people frequently didn't. "The lady of the house is not home."

"Happen Phoebe's out buying," he said in a British dialect so heavy Bingham could hardly understand him.

"I see. I hope you don't mind my looking around till she returns."

He had always made it a point not to start small talk in a situation like this; but that unresponsive gaze said to him, Birth marriage death may be sizable enough to talk about mister but they are none too large; the man rubbed his chin on the end of the handle.

"I'm only interested in the house," Bingham went on, embarrassed to be introducing a subject so fugitive. "Miss Cudahy—could you tell me. . . ."

But he heard, for the second time he realized, a sharp sound

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

behind and above him, a sound as of a gem rapped against glass; when he felt the hairs stand up on the back of his hand, he knew that he was being watched from behind the curtains by the eyes of one who had heard but had not answered his knock at the door. He left his sentence to dangle as it would and went on with his inspection; the man began to dig.

In the rear, there was a pile of wood, far more orderly than most of the garden, a vegetable patch, and a clothesline. And in the corner beyond the clothesline, half-hidden by an arc of delphiniums, there was a garden to itself, earth scratched and leveled, scarcely a dead petal on the blossoms, no rows but a wandering intermixed variety of plants and shrubs, stepping stones for paths; there were single roses and single geraniums, three tulips, Indian paint-brush and succulents from the sea-cliffs, most of them with small bright flowers, for June is spring in Mendocino, and a rolling fringe of yellow oxalis. He stood in a sort of wonder at the sweetness of that garden, at how dainty and feminine and itself it seemed down between the still-too-vigorous old huge house and the hedge which here was more than thirty feet in height. He wondered who Phoebe was.

That hedge; there were a number of such hedges along that part of the coast, but Miss Cudahy's was as dense and perfectly trimmed as any he had seen and was much the highest. These hedges were dark green and thick and not very noisy even in the wind, very dark green; they were kept trimmed smooth as moss, with rounded edges, and this one had ascents and dips in it for no reason that he could make out, at one point rose taller than the house; dark, impermeable cypress green, for though it kept out the wind it kept out everything else as well. He could not imagine how Chin-on-Shovel did the job of trimming, and he did not even want to imagine what it was like to live out a life with a prospect of grey skies, unkept fuchsias, and the dark of the green.

One at the front and the other at the rear, two arches ran through the hedge like the mouse-runs that pierced the vast walls of Muscovite palaces. Through the rear gate as he was standing there, entered a young woman with a basket of groceries in one hand, a bonnet on her head—more a bonnet than a hat—and a spring to her step. "Hello," he said, but she did not look at him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He stepped forward between two delphiniums and called again. She stopped, her lips a little open with surprise, and looked at him with a directness, a lack of demure withdrawal, which rather surprised him. "Could you tell me, please," he began, but she turned from him and ran, quite ran, up the stairs and into the house. He could think of no better course than to wait for a few discreet minutes and go knock at the front door. This he did, though not without trepidation.

She answered, with lowered eyes. He apologized for having startled her, and handed her his card. Without a word she walked back into the house. She appeared, at closer sight, a plain young woman, her hair drawn severely back to a bun, her face devoid of make-up yet not sallow, her clothes undistinguished for their color or grace; yet there was a certain tone to her body that quite set her off from an ordinary maid or housekeeper, a vigor to her step and a flirt, a fillip perhaps, to her skirts when she turned, that charmed him. She returned and opened the door wide to him; he thanked her and stepped into the hall; she smiled, not just politely but as though she were suppressing some private amusement, and ushered him into the parlor.

There lay, swathed in pastel chiffons, a large old woman on a chaise-longue.

"Mr. Bingham!" she called forth like the captain of one brig to the captain of another. "Come in, sir. Sit down." And she made what seemed to be some sort of complicated hailing motions with her hands.

"Thank you, Miss Cudahy," he said, and sat in a pale-oak horsehair chair near her. When he looked around, the girl had disappeared. "I'm afraid I rather startled Phoebe out in the garden a few minutes ago."

"Did you?" she cried. "She did not inform me of that. And how do you know her name?"

"Your gardener, I gathered it from him."

"Ah yes, of course." And he saw how, with a loll of her great head and a flick of her left hand, heavy with rings, she peered out between the curtains invisibly. Then she, with a suddenness that surprised him, turned back and said to him sharply, "You're from the FBI."

He had seen witnesses caught off-balance, and had pitied them

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for their slowness and dullness; but here he was thrown by an old woman's judo.

"Who, me?" he said. "Oh no, gracious no. I'm only. . . ."

"Very well," she waved his stuttering aside. "One of the other investigators. Which?"

"No, I assure you, I am interested in old houses. I enjoy them very much, and I. . . ."

"I see." She paused, the sort of pause that did not permit him to speak. He sat watching her fill a curved pipe with tobacco, tamp it expertly, and light up. "You may smoke," she said, and docilely he lit a cigarette. "You traced me through the California Historical Society."

"No," he said, "I am merely traveling, alone, along the Mendocino coast, looking for houses of the New England captains that settled here. And I found yours simply by driving down the street looking for it."

"How did you discover me behind this hedge?"

"By getting out of my automobile and looking through the gate."

"I see." She stared with a concentration as great as Phoebe's; it had an altogether different effect on him. "Well, you've seen the outside and you're in the parlor. What do you think?"

He began to exclaim over it, and rising asked her permission to investigate the parlor more closely.

"In good time," she said. "Sit down, Mr. Bingham. We will have tea."

She pulled a tasseled cord behind her head, and Phoebe appeared. She waved her hands at Phoebe with a mixture of fluttering and grace and indolence, and threw her head back onto the pillows. "Pardon me," she murmured; her mouth fell a little ajar. "One has to rest a good deal. More than one would have chosen."

He could look at her closely now. It was a heavy, pale, sensual face with dark pouches under the deep eyes; she was not so old as he had originally thought, not over sixty. Her arms were bare and fleshy; day was, he imagined, when those white arms had excited at least the admiration of men. He could see that one of her legs, extended on the chaise-longue, was bound in some sort of rubber legging reaching halfway down the calf; the other, foot on the floor, would have served well on a duke in the days of knee

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

breeches. She breathed heavily, nearly wheezing. "Asthma," she muttered, "damned nuisance." He sat straight in his slick, hard chair.

At the sound of Phoebe with the tea-tray at the door, he turned in pleased expectation. "Don't bother to speak to her," said Miss Cudahy scarcely moving her grey lips; he realized that she must have been watching him from under her lids. "Phoebe is deaf and dumb." He blushed, and did not know where to look.

2.

He did not see them again for a month and would not have gone back at all, even to see the rest of the house, had it not been for the newel, which he had only glanced at as he had been leaving the house; there was not another in California to compare to it. The month was workaday and legal, marked only by his failure to persuade an owner in North Oakland not to redecorate a Victorian specimen with mourning veil eaves, and by a rather curious invitation to speak. He received a telephone call and then a visit from a cultivated, charming, shrewd little woman named Pickman-Ellsworth, who wanted him to speak to the Alameda Fuchsia Society about the use of fuchsias in New England. He had to explain to her that he knew little about the subject and nothing at first hand. She received his refusal without protest, yet she continued talking, about one thing and another; she said that she had read some of his articles in the magazine *Golden West;* she kept throwing him subjects, visibly trying to "draw him out". He did not quite understand her purpose. She had black, quick eyes and sat very erect in her chair. She spoke to her chauffeur, as she left, with precisely that combination of dryness, condescension, and politeness with which she had addressed Bingham.

The newel at the foot of the stairs drew him back, that exquisitely carved, white newel with its promise of fine interiors on the second floor; the fluted newel, and, he had to confess it to himself, a curiosity about Miss Cudahy's household stronger than his repugnance for her herself.

He opened the gate, went through the hedge tunnel and walked up the stairs to the porch without seeing the Englishman gardener. He knocked the grand knocker—Miss Cudahy had no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

doorbell, indeed he felt that the electric lights in the old gas fixtures had furthered progress enough for her—and he stood waiting for Phoebe to open to him. He had calculated to himself what expression and gesture would best let Phoebe know the friendliness and pity he felt for her, what smile would blend recognition and warmth and yet least intrude upon her intimacy: the deference of the superior to the afflicted seemed to Bingham one of the few courtesies surviving from that high and better-mannered world lost to us to our diminution. This he had calculated—or, rather, had hoped to achieve—but he reckoned without Phoebe. How could he have known her? A glimpse of her, brown-dressed in the garden scurrying like a quail for cover; as maid in the hall, eyes downcast, smiling; a tea through which she had sat like a little girl, knees tightly pressed together, watching with a twinkle in her eye everything they did. How could he have known that the moment she opened the door now and saw him her eyes would light up, her cheeks would flush rosy red, her poor voice would crack a little, her hands would open out to him? Open so warmly and impetuously that he, smiling, would clasp them warmly in his, to the distress of all courtesy but to his most grateful pleasure. He did not touch people with casual affection, but rather shrank from it; he preferred words of congratulation to a slap on the back, the smile of privacy to a cocktail-party kiss; fastidiousness entails its dangers: he accepted them knowingly. But Phoebe's hands, rough-skinned and strong with work yet smaller than his, feminine in his, did not presume any intimacy or force any warmth of response: they extended him her words of greeting, inflection of her pleasure, her affection even, yet with hand's immediacy, touch's conviction. He smiled at her, foolish with sudden pleasure; his condescension snapped in her hands like a twig. He did not even feel embarrassed. It was as though he had known her a long time.

She took his hat and coat—it was a windy afternoon—and when she returned from hanging them up and found him admiring the newel, she pointed out to him something he had not yet noticed, the baseboard running along below the banisters, fretted beautifully and out of pure exuberance, uselessly, obscurely. She clasped her hands in pleasure at his pleasure. He started to his feet at Miss Cudahy's large voice: "Mr. Bingham, is that you?" He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pointed, and Phoebe led him by the hand to the parlor door; as she opened the door she let go his hand; after he had gone in she withdrew from them like a maid.

"Mr. Bingham," said Miss Cudahy, frowning as he advanced, "what delayed you in the hall?"

"The newel," he said. "And Phoebe drew my attention to the fretted baseboard on the staircase."

"Did she?" said Miss Cudahy. "I hope you are well." And she took his hand.

"Very well," he answered, and it was all he could do to outsqueeze the grey-faced, lame old woman. "I hope in turn that your health has improved."

"How could it?" she said; she lolled back and pulled the rope. "At my age, in a climate like this, with no one to talk to?"

"It is hard," he said; he could scarcely have said less.

"Do you know how hard?" she replied scornfully. Phoebe appeared and Miss Cudahy waved some message at her. "Mr. Bingham, are you intending to buy my house? What do you want of me?"

"Believe me, I am interested only in the beauty of your house. I study old houses as an avocation."

"Beauty comes high on the market these days," she said fixing him with her eye. "Some kinds of beauty. Does this kind?"

"No," he answered rather flatly. "It does not."

"Are you just here for the day again, Mr. Bingham?"

"No, I am spending part of my vacation exploring these parts."

"How much of it, do you think?"

"That depends upon many considerations."

"One of which is me, I take it?"

"Indeed," he said in the manner of a gallant, "how could it be otherwise?"

"The *Golden West* said you were a lawyer."

"Not exactly a lawyer. I am in legal work."

"Not a lawyer but in legal work," she repeated. "Slippery."

"Miss Cudahy," he said, arising, with all the dignity he could muster, "I would very much appreciate your permission to explore the rest of this house. I will take no photographs of it, and write nothing about it for publication, without your signed permission." This was more than she had let him get out during his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

entire first visit; only his anger had broken him through her complex defense so that he could now confront her simply with what he wanted.

"Ho," she shouted, "I've offended you, have I? I offend people. It usually takes longer with others. You are different. Sit down, young man, you've seen only this room and the hall, and there's more here worth the seeing you may be sure."

He sat down, gritting his teeth behind his smile. "The newel, Miss Cudahy, is worthy of McIntyre himself."

"Yes," she said quizzically, "worthy of him. In the master bedroom"—she knew how to play her mouse—"on the second floor, Mr. Bingham, where I have not been for three years . . . My damned joints," she said banging the knee of her left leg. "In the master bedroom, when you get to it, you will notice the mantel. McIntyre, is it? I must tell you about that some day."

"Why not tell me now?" he said with the last of his anger.

Phoebe came in bearing the tea things; neither of them turned towards her.

"Because, Mr. Bingham, it is not my pleasure."

They had tea.

3.

For the twentieth time he looked at the note she had slipped into his hand: "Meet me outside the rear gate at 4:30." Already he had waited a quarter of an hour; a cold wind was blowing in from the sea; every fantasy of waiting afflicted him, wrong time, wrong place, accident, change of heart; he shivered back into his car. He did not happen to be looking when she came through the hedge and ran around the back of his car. Suddenly there she was, opening the door and slipping in beside him smiling. The ruefulness, the trace of anxiety, vanished from her face when she saw how gladly he forgave her, her forehead smoothed, she squeezed his arm. What could he do but take her hands in his? The good humor and affection of her smile became a sort of radiance which warmed him as he would not have believed possible three hours before.

What did she want? He started to draw out a pencil and paper, but she gently restrained his hands. With perfect good humor

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and seriousness, in a few quick gestures, she suggested driving somewhere, getting out, and walking. He started the car; she directed. On the cliff above a turbulent, rocky surf, she stopped them and led him down a path. He heard a bell buoy offshore busy in its melancholy; he had never stood close to rough weather on the sea before. Phoebe sprang up onto a rock beside him and leaned her hand on his shoulder; her hair glistened with blown spray, there were tiny drops on her eyelashes; she kept looking from the surf back at his face expectantly; he did not disappoint her for she clapped her hands and occasionally her voice emitted some of its pathetic, ugly symptoms of excitement. She led him to a sort of overhang where they could squat protected from the wind; he noticed that Phoebe's free hand pressed feelingly against the rock, and he imagined her delicate excitement from the waves' crashing on the outside of the rocks of their cave. He knew that later he would worry about the propriety of his behavior with Phoebe, wonder what he should have done instead, speculate on what she was thinking, what his actions meant to her; but for the time they huddled together there, his affection for her, pure and unamorous as though she were a child, dissolved all questions of motive, propriety, consequence, and left only a residue of unalloyed content. Squatting in a cold cave, with a view of lashing breakers under a heavy sky, damp, feet cold, holding hands with a deaf-mute girl he had met only once before, truly he thought himself seven sorts of fool, but he grinned at the thought.

She peered out of the cave at the sky, looked at him ruefully, and made some sign gestures; then, remembering he could not understand them, she put her hands gently on his arm, with a look of apology. Phoebe's gestures, the movements of her features, expressed, with the economy and delicacy of a trout swimming in a clear pool, a range of ideas and emotions as great as many a person can manage with words. Yet physically she was not delicate but rather blunt and unsymmetrical, not pretty but, as Bingham thought, one of the beautiful opposites of pretty. She taught him then and there in the cave a dozen ordinary words in sign language: I, you, car, home, day, like, go, sea, be together, mama, not, must. They laughed a great deal as his fingers blundered some sentences together: I you together like go sea. When he asked her how to say happy she showed him, and house, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

door; but when he wrote love on the sand with a twig, she shook her head. She made the gestures of liking and being together, but pointed at love and looked at him reprovingly. He saw that she had more tact than he, and very likely more honesty. She told him then she had to go home to mama. Mama? he asked her, and she nodded. Who? he said with his lips. Miss Cudahy, she wrote on the sand, sprang up and ran off towards the path. For a few moments he watched her, incredulous and frustrated; he felt very fond of her. He watched her climb the path, not thinking, but only looking at the slight figure quick and graceful in its brown, practical, shapeless clothes, not feeling even, only wishing he knew her well. And just before he got up to follow her he remembered Miss Cudahy's hard look when Phoebe had spilled some tea on the table, and he shuddered to feel cold little feet creeping about his back as they would when, lying in bed on the way to sleep, he chanced to think about the latest advances in bomb-making.

Next morning, arriving just after the postman, he carried Miss Cudahy's mail up to the front door with him. He saw one from Mrs. Pickman-Ellsworth. He was feeling grim when Phoebe let him into the parlor.

"Oh, ho," cried Miss Cudahy after the civilities; she waved an envelope at him. "Let's see what Nell has to say about you. Just step into the dining room till I call you, Mr. Bingham, if you don't mind. You'll find Phoebe polishing the silver."

He fumbled among his unsorted emotions, unable to find the one that would suit his response; what he did was simply to thank her and do what she said—after all, he reflected, he had not yet seen the dining room.

Phoebe did not stop polishing, but whenever, in his inspection of the room, he passed near her she would rub against him a little like a cat. Miss Cudahy shouted him back.

"She says you're respectable," she said, and puffed on her pipe a few times gazing at him. "Good reputation, good family. I want you to stay with me, Mr. Bingham, for as long as you're going to be in this vicinity. I like you. You may have the master bedroom; I'll tell you who it was made for, some day. Phoebe needs the society of a cultivated man. Poor creature. Do you like her?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Very much." But he did not want to talk about her to Miss Cudahy. "Thank you for the invitation. I do not want to intrude . . ."

"Nonsense, that's my concern, not yours. There are not many literate people hereabouts. Mrs. Townson in Mendocino City, the Chiverses in Fort Bragg, who else? You ask me why I continue to live in Stowes Landing. My answer to you is, I don't. I live in this house."

"You have good taste in houses."

"Because it is your taste? Well, I like to be flattered, Mr. Bingham, but don't try to flatter me about my knowledge of New England houses. Between us we could write a good book on the old houses of this county." She puffed reflectively, gazing at him. "Mine's the best of course. Think it over. You could live here while we were at it, of course. I want to look at my mail now. Would you be so good as to step into the garden and tell Japheth to spray the roses?"

He looked at the appointments of the parlor and hall with a new eye as he walked out: they were his to use, and she would tell him all she knew. On the front steps he imagined a roseate fantasy—a month, even six weeks of solid research and photographing, then one of the major contributions to the history of California architecture would be his. He even looked with a benevolent eye at Japheth, whom he found standing with some cuttings in one hand and clippers in the other, staring at a rose. He delivered his message with positive friendliness; Japheth winked at him, touched his cap with the clippers, and then, leering, pulled off a rose-branch so that it half-split the cane. "It wasn't so in the old country," he whispered. Bingham left hurriedly. Walking away, he rummaged about in his mind for his fantasy, but he could not find it again.

Half from plan and half because it was the nearest entrance, he ran up the back stairs and into the kitchen.

Glistening copper pots and pans hung on the walls; the old wood stove took up far more room than it needed to by the standards of modern efficiency; there was a hatchet in the box with the kindling; three comfortable, mended kitchen chairs, envy of snobs, sat about the stove; the worn linoleum, black and white checkered, was as clean with scrubbing as a boy's ears; it smelled

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

good in the kitchen, of apples and coffee. Some sort of odd combination of flag-arms, as in a railroad signal, was attached to the wall over the pantry door; even as he was wondering what it was for, one of the flags, the white one, fell out at right angles; obviously a signal for Phoebe. It jiggled up and down; he stepped through the pantry into the dining room, and went with Phoebe into the parlor again.

"Do you approve of my kitchen, Mr. Bingham?"

"I do. Phoebe keeps it in admirable order."

"It's a pleasant place to spend the supper hours in the winter, let me tell you. You must visit us in the winter."

"I should be delighted." He felt constrained to say something more. "Your garden must have been a prize at one time."

"It was."

"A great pity it has fallen into neglect."

"Do you have ideas for it, Mr. Bingham?" She was full of animation.

"Only the obvious ideas for the circumstances."

"The very thing!" she cried. "It would give you some exercise as we worked on our book. I can see by your figure you don't get enough exercise. Splendid, sir, a splendid addition."

He smiled painfully. "I don't enjoy gardening."

"Nonsense. You need it." She saw that she had gone too far. "Of course, of course," she went on heavily, "there would be no necessity. Japheth keeps the fuchsias from dying out. Phoebe would work with you in the garden. She likes it. She likes being with you."

Phoebe, having lip-read the gist of the conversation, smiled up at Bingham so sweetly that he, in relief from the old woman, half reached out his hand to her in response; propriety halted him. Phoebe, seeing his broken gesture, stepped beside him and took his hand; all three laughed at his blush.

"Well," said Miss Cudahy, shifting her bulk about, "everything is working out handsomely. Phoebe must show you your room. You must fetch your things and install yourself. We shall take an outing one day soon, Mr. Bingham. Zenobia Dobbs has a house in Greenwood you should see the inside of before you leave here, and I doubt if you went alone that she would be so hospitable to you as I have been."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He did not thank her for her hospitality, as she apparently wanted him to do, because he did not think she had been moved by hospitality to do what she was doing. He said he should like to see the house in Greenwood.

"But where is this town?" he asked. "I don't recognize the name."

"They took to calling it Elk a few years ago," she said. "There are not many like you, Mr. Bingham, who cherish the old things. The world rots and we rot with it."

She tossed some keys to Phoebe, fluttered her hand, and shifted herself back on her chair. Among her pale violet clothes, in that light that cast no shadow, her face seemed nearly ethereal, yet her body was huge.

Upstairs, Phoebe showed him the master bedroom; she kept looking from his face to the mantel or the bedstead or the moulding, pleased yet puzzled by the great impression the room was making on him, trying to see it with his eyes. She showed him the bathroom, Japheth's room, which was a dark cupboard, and her own room facing west, austere this side of barrenness, feminine only in the lace curtains. Then, with sparkling eyes, dancing a little in excitement, taking both his hands in one of hers, she opened the door to the last bedroom. His impression was one of darkness, scent, frills, musty old letters. She threw open the shutters; they were in a boudoir, among a luxury which had made feminine and intimate the stern woodwork, the right-angled room. There was a satin quilt on the low bed; at the sight of it he made a mock-gesture of indolence, and in an instant Phoebe was lying there. She took some pins out of her hair and shook it free; it was brown, fine hair. She laid her head at a certain angle on the pillows, curved one arm up over her head and the other onto her stomach, and turned her body in the fashion of all experience and luxuriation. It was only a moment until she bounced up smiling and clasping his hand, simple and young again.

He heard a clicking in the hall, and Miss Cudahy shouting that she wanted Phoebe. He told her; she put up her hair in a second; on their way down, she flipped the hall flag back up into place. On the landing of the stairs, yielding to what impulse he did not know, he stopped Phoebe just to look at her intently. Her face was cheery and flushed; when she saw his expression, she pressed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

herself against him, her head bowed onto his shoulder; he held her tightly a moment and kissed the top of her head. Miss Cudahy called again and they went on down.

She looked thunderous.

"Mr. Bingham," she said. "I heard the springs squeak."

He was very angry. "I dare say you did. I pressed the mattress to see what it was like, and Phoebe sat on the bed in the south room."

"Sat on it!" cried Miss Cudahy and motioned to Phoebe to go stand beside her. "Sat on it indeed! She jumped on it."

"Yes, and lay on it," he said, thin-lipped. "It is more luxury than she is used to."

"That was my room, and my mother's before me. I have restored it. I intended that you should look at the architecture and not the décor. I am displeased."

"Indeed. As though the one were not a part of the other."

"Well," she said, and suddenly she smiled and put her arm around Phoebe's legs, stroking her thigh. "One cannot be too careful. What is your opinion of what you saw upstairs?"

"It all but equals the newel in excellence."

"Quite so. Now then, Mr. Bingham," she said affably, "I think we can manage a way of working together. There are problems of course, not insuperable ones, I trust. How soon will you be able to come?"

"Why . . . I am not sure. I would have to arrange for a leave of absence beyond my usual vacation allowance."

"Rather. It will take us months at least, by my plan."

"Oh, I don't. . . ."

"You have no sentimental ties in Oakland?—No, and Phoebe will be with us. You will be kind to Phoebe, Mr. Bingham? She has suffered from the lack of suitable male acquaintance."

"Why," he stammered, not knowing how to avoid indelicacy, "to be sure, I am fond of Phoebe, I will be kind, there is no problem."

"She means much to me, sir. Perhaps I try, as they say, to relive my youth through her. What does it matter? I mean her to be happy." She pressed her cheek against Phoebe's hip. "Did you ever see finer legs, sir?" Phoebe smoothed, indulgently, the iron-grey hair, smiling at Bingham. "We must handle Phoebe with care, must we not?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

4.

On his fourth morning at Miss Cudahy's, he left at dawn to drive up the coast as far as Fort Bragg; the ragged coastline, the sombre landscape illuminated by spring flowers, the old barns patched with moss, the sheep, the small towns, all pleased him greatly, but he found no architectural points of interest to him, nothing he had not seen the like of before. He was not concentrating well, to be sure; he rubbered along, the amateur tourist; he said to himself that he had exhausted the district, but in truth he had left his thoughts disassembled behind. He returned to Stowes Landing not long after lunch, having intended to stay away until dark.

He knocked at the door, which was kept always locked; he had not been entrusted with a key. Finally the old woman herself answered.

"Ho," she said, and pounded her cane on the floor in her pleasure. "I was wanting you. It's too fine a day to waste in old houses. We're going for an outing down to Greenwood. Good. Good. Give me ten minutes in my room and I'll be ready."

"Fifteen," he said. "I want to clean up before going out again."

"Very well," she answered and stalked down the hall towards her room. "That's a fine sun they've got out there. Damn the hedge on a day like this."

There was not a sound upstairs as he washed and changed. There seldom was. He wished he knew whether Phoebe was in her room.

Miss Cudahy clumped back into the hall again and called him down. She was in front of the hall mirror arranging on her head a wide-brimmed, violet hat with a fringe of tiny tassels.

"We're off!" she cried. "Zenobia Dobbs, you must see her house. I haven't been in it for years. So you like my newel, Mr. Bingham." He exclaimed again that he did. "It's never been photographed." He said what she wanted him to say. "Well, help me down the stairs."

"I did not realize you could go down steps, Miss Cudahy."

"Down I can make it. It's up that breaks my back. You'll have to get Japheth to help you get me up."

She leaned heavily on his shoulder, taking the steps one at a time, and at the bottom she paused to snort like a horse.

"Where is Phoebe?" he asked.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"In the kitchen, I suppose. Where she belongs at any rate."

"She is coming with us?" he asked, just barely polite.

"I had not planned that she should."

"She would enjoy it," he said. "I will fetch her."

"Zenobia and she do not hit it off."

"Then I shall take Phoebe for a walk while you have tea with Mrs. Dobbs."

She did not answer him but started off toward the south side of the house.

Phoebe was not in the kitchen, not anywhere downstairs. He had to open the door to her room to see if she was in it. She was lying crosswise on her bed like a child, her head and bare arms bright in the sunshine that poured through her window. She had taken off her shoes and stockings; her legs were stretched up the side of the wall, one foot rubbing the other. He shook his head to clear it, and told her—he had learned more of her sign-language—to put on her bathing suit and come for a trip. She clapped her hands with joy, leaped up, and pushed him out of her room playfully.

They found Miss Cudahy waving her cane at glowering Japheth and threatening to beat him. Bingham led her to the car.

"Hmph," she snorted as they drove away. "They said he was hopeless but I knew I could handle him. The fools, they decided he needed love and kindness, but he took it for weakness. I've had him for years, and I give him unbuttered bread and a whip. And liquor on Saturday night."

"Miss Cudahy," he said, "have you ever considered having Phoebe taught to speak? I believe there are people who. . . ."

"I have considered it, Mr. Bingham, but I shall not have it done. She is happy. At Mrs. Dobbs', you will return for me at five o'clock, and she will show you the house. You might leave Phoebe in the car."

"I would hate to leave Phoebe in the car," he said, and he told himself that only if the house were very attractive would he do it.

Phoebe, having seen their angry heads, leaned forward from the back seat and laid a restraining hand on each of them.

"In the eyes of God, Mr. Bingham, she may be worth ten of us. Meanwhile she does what I tell her to do, and I'd thank you to remember it." He just managed to swallow his anger; as it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were in payment she said, "My grandfather, of whom I was telling you yesterday, brought the newel and the two mantels around the Horn on his own ship. They cost him a fortune."

He touched Phoebe's hand with his, and so did Miss Cudahy. They smiled at her and fell silent. There was brilliant sunlight all the way to Elk.

They spent two hours on the beach alone. There was a tunnel through a tall rock island a few yards offshore, through which the ocean drove frothing and soughing; once, the tide coming in, a great wave made a whistling noise in the tunnel. A northbound ship near the horizon spent the two hours going out of sight. They found some crabs in a pool and scared them back into their ledge, and laughed at their anger and clicking. The water was too cold for swimming but they waded in it a little; most of the time they lay on the sand. Bingham thought her legs to be in the lovely hinterland between trim and heavy, and from the way she took off her skirt, from the way she displayed them and drew his head once down into her lap, he knew she wanted him to admire them, to touch them with his fingers. There was scarcely a moment when they were not touching.

He asked her if she wanted to learn to speak. She smiled rather wistfully, and nodded; but she told him she was happy anyway. He told her it was a shame that Miss Cudahy would not do it. She shook her head and put a finger on his lips. He told her there was a school in Oakland where she could learn to speak. She closed her eyes, smiling, till he promised not to continue with the subject, and she kissed the tip of his nose. They were half an hour late for Miss Cudahy. He did not think the Dobbs house worth enough to abandon Phoebe in the car just to see it.

Miss Cudahy did not seem to mind their being late; she seemed mellow. Several times on the way home she motioned for Phoebe's hand, pressed it against her cheek, nipped at her finger with her lips. "You are keeping our bargain, Mr. Bingham," she said. "I have never known Phoebe to be happier. Tomorrow may be a good day for you to commence your photography."

Japheth and he together got her up the front steps; the problem was now to transport her in such a way as to let her think they were only helping her. Japheth did not even try, and she was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

furious with him. Once she beat Bingham on the neck. "I'm so sorry," she trumpeted. "Mistake, mistake." And she beat Japheth the harder for her error. He spat on the steps as he went back to work in the garden.

At dinner Bingham found it just possible to be civil. Miss Cudahy was wheezing a good deal and did not make much demand upon him; he was able to brood inward upon his own thoughts. They were not even thoughts, just two strong sensations, about which his mind prowled and peered with no result: Miss Cudahy's mistaken blow on his neck and, quite as vivid as that though smaller and softer, the warm light kiss Phoebe had put there as soon as she could, to make up for the blow. He had not been struck in anger since he was a child, nor kissed since then so tenderly. He did not know what to make of such strong experience. He felt neither anger nor gratitude, felt nothing that deserved so differentiated a name as resentment, say, or affection; indeed, so far as he knew he felt nothing except, on the skin and down into the muscles of his neck, the two touches of the two women. Yet, when at the end of the meal, staring at a crumb like a yogi, he did not hear Miss Cudahy ask him a question and she rapped on her tumbler with her ring, barking out "Mr. Bingham," he started from his chair and glared at her wildly a moment, leaned on the edge of the table and whispered intently "No! No!" "No coffee?" she said, a little taken aback. He subsided, under Phoebe's restraining hand. "Sorry," he mumbled; "I was thinking of something else. Yes, coffee, please." He had been feeling more than touches on the neck, and with that feudal rap on the glass some of it began turmoiling up and out.

He did not even assist Miss Cudahy from her chair, but bolted into the kitchen where, for the first time, he wiped dishes for Phoebe as she washed. She kept her eyes downcast on her business; even when he patted her arm for attention or physically turned her head about, she did not look at his eyes, but only at his lips, or at his hands stumbling and tripping in their rush like lips stuttering from anger; once, she caught the frustrated things and kissed each palm gently, then turned back to her suds. He stood beside her, the kisses warm in his hands, just staring at her; feeling his chin nearly begin to quiver he bustled back to his job; but his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anger was gone, and all he felt now was that Phoebe was altogether delicate and alive and pitiable and needing to be saved. He understood now, without hatred, how Miss Cudahy would want to hold her; but Phoebe must be saved; and more, she must want to be saved.

As she was hanging up the dishcloth, finished, he held her waist with a gentleness she immediately recognized, for she looked back over her shoulder up into his eyes; he kissed her; scarcely moving, she yielded against him. There were tears in their eyes when they drew apart, and at that instant Bingham felt that he might have fetched her coat and hat and driven her off to Oakland without an objection from her. But she must freely desire to leave Miss Cudahy; she must not be swayed from that old woman's will only to become subject to his, though better, will. He sat her by the oven, poured a cup of coffee for each of them, sat in front of her so that their knees touched, and asked her, "Will you come to Oakland with me?" It would have been coy of her, gazing against his earnest gaze, to treat his question playfully, to pretend she didn't take him seriously: the leap of eagerness that brightened her eyes and pressed her hands together meant to him only that she wanted to come to Oakland; yet she did not sign the answer in return. "I can take you with me when I go. I have friends you can stay with till we find a permanent arrangement for you. Don't worry, I will make it a point to see you often." It would have been weak of her, under his insistence, to have begun crying in order to avoid meeting his challenge: yet he saw tears come to her eyes after his last pressing; he would have relented—must she not choose freely?—but that she answered him then: I owe Miss Cudahy so much. "Of course," he answered, "and you can return to her if you want, but you owe it to yourself to go to the school." She needs me, Phoebe pleaded; what would she do without me? And with that he pounded the table; but not too loud, for fear Miss Cudahy would hear him. It would be like a betrayal, Phoebe told him. "You must leave her sooner or later," he responded (No, her head shook), "you owe it to yourself to go now." She buried her face in her hands, but in a heat of compelling he pulled them away and, clutching her wrists hard, said with his lips, "You must come with me." She wilted then, as though he had uttered a magic formula—composed of common words perhaps, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nonetheless magic. She would come if he would get Miss Cudahy's permission. "But no, but no! You must come of your own free will." Shaking her head, miserable, she sat on his lap and hid her face against his neck, so that all he could do, imagining how that old woman would greet such a proposal, was to hold Phoebe as though she were crying, in need of comforting; yet he was conscious of her warm breathing, of her lips half-kissing the soft joining of his shoulder and neck, of her woman's body which his hands were embarrassed how to hold. Old Japheth came in for coffee and at the sight of them muttered Bitch! Bitch! In a sort of desperation of confusion, Bingham pushed Phoebe off his lap and, flapping his hands, went up to his room.

But there was no peace for him there at all. To rescue her became, as he writhed on the bed in that handsome, alien room, his obsession and immediate need. His pain was purer and stronger than it could have been had he suspected for a second that there was more causing it than the desire to liberate an oppressed, afflicted person he knew. But as it was, that pain was so great that he had to creep back downstairs again hoping to find Phoebe in the kitchen alone where he could bring matters to a head; for he did not know what he would do if she did not assert herself tonight. The afterwards would work itself out, and if Miss Cudahy should suffer, then she should suffer.

As he reached, silently, the bottom step, he saw through the half-open door to the parlor Phoebe sitting beside Miss Cudahy, who was lolling back in the chaise-longue looking at her from under her eyelids and fondling her arm. For a long time he froze on that step; all he felt for that painful time was the gracefully curving, worn, smooth old wood of the rail in his hand. Quivering with emotions he did not understand and no longer cared about controlling, he went into the room. As he spoke, but not until then, he realized from the suspicion of quaver in his voice that he would not be able to stand up to the old woman.

"Miss Cudahy," he said, as evenly as he could manage, "I thank you for your hospitality, but I am leaving."

"What?" she cried, altogether surprised. "You are just becoming one of us."

"I am not. I am leaving immediately."

"You have not taken your photograph yet."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No," he said; he had thought he would be adamant. "I am obliged to leave suddenly." He would make no excuse, only get out. But his eye was drawn by the exquisite proportions of the frame around the window behind the two women. "Perhaps when I come back up later this summer I shall be able to complete my study."

"*Our* book, Mr. Bingham?"

"Of course, of course, complete our study."

"Perhaps. We shall see." She thrust unhappy Phoebe from the chair. "I shall get to the bottom of this."

He had packed in five minutes. Phoebe was waiting for him in the hall, tears in her eyes. He wrote down the name of the motel where he was going to stay the night and told her to come there first thing in the morning. She nodded, and looked at him in bewilderment, longingly.

At the front door he was touching her hands good-bye and telling her she must come as soon as she could, when Miss Cudahy shouted, "Send Phoebe to me at once!" He kissed her quickly on the cheek, and left.

5.

He could not remain alone and waking in that alien, ugly motel, but neither did he want to go near the surge of the sea. He walked towards the hills through a pleasant pasture, and as he was walking he heard on the other side of a fence bleating sheep; he went to the fence to watch them in the light of the high moon. They stared at him for a moment like citizens in a bus, and when he rattled the top rail of the fence they stared at him again and shied away; he played with them off and on for an hour or more, an hour of relief: their stares were simple and sufficient, they left him alone.

He lay in bed feeling as though he were floating. He put his hands under his head and gazed at the moon, not thinking so much as watching thoughts dance through his mind. The moon had wheeled into the western sky by the time he had fallen asleep.

A rattle at the door awoke him. The moon had set. He sat up and called, "Who is it?" There was another rattle and a low,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

amorphous cry. He opened the door to Phoebe. She grasped both his hands in hers hard, and threw herself face down on the bed crying, turned away from him. He closed the windows and built a fire in the stove, and then for fifteen minutes or so sat on the bed beside her stroking her hair and arms, shuddering a little with alarm, ready to weep himself that he could say nothing to her.

At last she turned her face towards him, and gradually her crying subsided. Her mouth, now that he came to watch her face so closely, lost the contours of grief and reassumed its usual expression; hers was somehow softer than most mouths, less revealing of character, more innocent. She ceased to make those hard, inchoate cries that disturbed him. She became Phoebe again. He was astonished in a new way at how tenderly he felt toward her, thinking of what she must be suffering now, partly for his sake.

"Did she scold you?" he asked, and her answer was only the most rueful smile in the world. "What is this?" he cried suddenly and bent down to look at three fresh bruises on the back of Phoebe's leg, just above the knee. "Did she hurt you?" he said to her. She shrugged: what difference did it make? "Pinch?" She shrugged: yes, but it was the least of my pain. "Vicious," he muttered to himself pounding the fist of one hand into the palm of the other, "damned, cruel, vicious old bitch."

Phoebe made him sit beside her and asked him if he would ever come back to the house; he told her no. Her lip quivered; she threw her arms around him as though to hold him forever, and pulled him down beside her. When he could, he freed himself and told her she must go with him. When are you leaving? Tomorrow, he answered, and she turned from him again to cry. He was trembling with anger so hard that Phoebe finally turned over and smiled as best she could. He gave her his handkerchief to use for her tears.

He lay down facing her and put his arm over her waist; their legs were touching. They lay looking at each other peacefully, touching gently. But it seemed to him after a time that something was required of him; the simplest, easiest thing to do would be to kiss her, but just because it was so easy he distrusted it, and besides it would be taking advantage of her as he had sworn to himself not to do; perhaps he should renew his offer to take her to the school in Oakland, assuring her again that he had meant it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But when she saw what he was starting to tell her she stopped him, tenderly but certainly. Her hand, still and yet alive, lay curled against his throat, warm and other and loving, and seemed to him to reproach him for some lack. It was all he could do to support her unflinching gaze; in no way did she actually reproach him, yet he could not respond to that gaze with a smile or in fact with any expression at all; it was not a response her gaze sought, but somehow him himself; an unpitying, devouring, utterly unmalicious gaze; it did not demand, it took. As the uneasy night wore on, lying half-embraced on his left side awkwardly, he gradually suffocated with the knowledge that Phoebe had the unopposable rights of one who, in a way he was appalled to imagine, loved.

At the first evidences of dawn he leaped up and dressed, telling her that for the sake of her reputation she must leave the motel immediately. She lay watching his bustle with her steady, innocent, direct gaze. He stood before her urging her to rise. Is this the last time I shall ever see you? He could not bear her directness. "No, no, of course not, it's all settled. How could you say such a thing? You are going with me to Oakland, today, now, as soon as you've packed your bags. We're going to Miss Cudahy's now." He was frenetic and pressed too hard. "I'll be waiting for you in the car outside the hedge at nine o'clock. It's all settled?" She smiled into tears, into the tears, he thought, of joy, and nodded. She pulled him down on top of her and held him so hard and kissed him so ardently that he was alarmed. They left the motel. For a moment, parking outside the hedge, kissing her again, he had the wild notion of driving off with Phoebe then and there, however it might look; but before he had time either to act on the impulse or to reject it, with a cry that startled him she had opened the door of the car and run in.

At nine o'clock she had not emerged from that tunnel in the hedge, nor at quarter past. At nine-thirty he got out of the car and went in the front gate.

At the window of her room on the second floor, Phoebe was standing, wearing her bathrobe, evidently crying. She kept shaking her head. She made a gesture, from her heart to her lips to him, that could have meant only one thing. His heart throbbing in his throat with the pity and the loss, he made the signs "To-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gether, we must go together". If there had been any way for him to get her free from that house he would have used it at that moment; he blamed himself for having let her come back at all; he could scarcely bear to think of her life locked in as it would be and had been. She buried her face in her hands and turned slowly from the window.

He ran to the front door and pounded the knocker; there was no response. He knocked till the great door reverberated; he would have shouted had he not been afraid of alarming the neighbors. Finally there was the sound of a cane and of coughing at the end of the hallway. He trembled; his lips were tense with the recriminations with which he would greet Miss Cudahy. She opened the door, wide, and stood staring at him. "Yes?" Instantly he became aware of his dishevelled appearance. "As you know, my work, it is. . . ." "Go get your kodak, Mr. Bingham," she said, guttural with scorn. She pointed with her cane, holding her arm out full length, the garments trailing. "You may photograph my newel if you're quick about it." His mouth opened, but he did not say anything. "Mind you don't go upstairs," said Miss Cudahy and returned down the hall. He turned, went down the steps, and ran to his car. On his way back in, burdened with his camera and lighting equipment, he glanced furtively up, and was grateful to see that Phoebe had drawn the curtains to her room. He had to run out again for his tripod, because he could not hold the camera steady. There was not another sound in the house as he worked. In fifteen minutes he had finished and left.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SOL STEIN

The Frowning Mask

Behind the rudeness of the drape
The princely patron of the arts
Plays careful chess. He avoids
The blackness of the blacker squares,
The pits that go beneath the board
To cellars, snakes, and ratchet racks.
Reaching for the servant's tray,
He takes Borgia's brimming cup, and drinks.

The money changers mourn the prince,
Munch golden apples on a stick,
Dream of servants standing stiff
And the breathless houris dancing.
Yawning, they stretch their talons out
To rolling ships at sea, and drag to shore
The world, the world. And tied with ribbons,
Perfumed, they take it to the market place.

And see the *condottiere's* armor shine
Reflected in the lady's eye.
Though convenient dragons roam no more
There are men to march, commands to roar,
And horses to gallop in frantic search
Of another war. Make way, make way,
The *condottiere* comes with the ruffling drums,
His sword held high and waiting.

My Eyes

are body openings
also.
They feed on light easily,
easily

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

make light and dark of it,
looking
at life with a measuring
thumb,
two jewels in my head
I would
not trade for radar;
I do
not have to tell them see
to see;
they are not fooled
by tinfoil.
I do not care that habit
claps them
shut against the dark, that
socketed
so near the mind, they find no rest
but sleep.
I lay me down and know
the day
will splay light against the glass,
and portholes
will swing out to let each pupil
catch
its lightstruck lesson: the endless sea
is green.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A. R. AMMONS

Two Poems

I

The whaleboat struck
and we came ashore
to the painted faces
  O primitives I said
and the arrow sang to my throat
Leaving myself on the shore
I went away
and when a heavy wind caught me I said
  My body lies south
  given over to vultures and flies
and wrung my hands
so the wind went on
Another day a wind came saying
  Bones
  lovely and white
  lie on the southern sand
  the ocean has washed bright
I said
  O bones in the sun
and went south
The flies were gone
The vultures no longer searched
the ends of my hingeless bones
for a trace of lean or gristle
Breathing the clean air
I picked up a rib
  to draw figures in the sand
till there is no roar in the ocean
no green in the sea
till the northwind flings no waves
across the open sea
I, running in and out with the waves
I, singing old Devonshire airs

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

II

I went out to the sun
where it burned over a desert willow
and getting under the shade of the willow
I said
  It's very hot in this country
The sun said nothing so I said
  The moon has been talking about you
and he said
  Well what is it this time

  She says it's her own light
He threw his flames out so far
they scorched the top of the willow
  Well I said of course I don't know

The sun went on and the willow was glad
I found an arroyo and dug for water
which I got muddy and then clear
so I drank a lot
and washed the salt from my eyes
and taking off my shirt
hung it on the willow to dry and said
  This land, where whirlwinds
walking at noon in tall columns of dust
  take stately turns about the desert
  is a very dry land
So I went to sleep under the willow tree

When the moon came up it was cold
and reaching to the willow for my shirt
I said to the moon
  You make it a pretty night
so she smiled

A night-lizard rattled stems behind me
and the moon said
  I see over the mountain
  the sun is angry
Not able to see him I called and said
  Why are you angry with the moon
  since all at last must be lost
  to the great vacuity

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHARLES GULLANS

Midsummer Day

Here in the lounging shade of noon I wait
Upon the slow descent of summer's state.
Blown roses go to seed, their petals brown,
Turn crisp along the edges and droop down
About the seedpod's firm and knuckled ball.
The vines are dense upon the garden wall,
In places, massive, override the top
With green exuberance before they stop,
Held to their individual clusters there
By brown and yellow jars of earthenware.
The grapes are full; some late and hard still run
Along the lattice where three days of sun
May bring them to perfection on the vine,
And the last sweetness to the heavy wine.

To a Friend, Almost Lost

Quos ego—

Scorn me as reason, who am always there,
Loud at the gate, louder than your despair,
Crowding the edges of your meditation,
But think what bade me come to take that station.

I have not come, like conscience, unpreferred,
To call insistently and be deferred,
And not with pride, in which I am offended,
But dignity, separate and undefended.

There is not room for pride between such friends
As we have been, who need not make amends
For casual and chance differences of mind,
But ferity in us were still unkind.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I came at first upon your own request,
Now to be driven out like a rude guest,
And nothing said of what has moved you so.
I find in silence your command to go

But wonder still between the gate and door.
Now I have told you all and speak no more,
Think what you say, while I shall still be there,
My own voice silent in the morning air.

Poema Morale

How foolishly I loved
Since you could not be moved
From disaffection:
Pity has always proved
To be rejection.

To what had I been true
In loving so? Not you,
But to illusion,
Cherished until you knew
Its full intrusion.

And if I love you still,
Why then, the heart is ill,
And ill in action,
Corrupting all the will
By its distraction.

I'll not love you again
Nor relive an old pain
In a changed fashion,
My heart has so long been
Calmed by dispassion.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ADALINE GLASHEEN

Finnegans Wake and the Girls from Boston, Mass.

In *Finnegans Wake* much is made of the sexual crime that H. C. Earwicker committed at the magazine wall in Phoenix Park, Dublin, a crime that is at once the misdemeanor of a private citizen and the fall of Adam. Joyce thus redeems Stephen Dedalus's promise of rewriting *Paradise Lost,* although it is possible to feel that God's ways toward man are less mysterious than Joyce's. For, among other eccentricities, Joyce provides his Adam with two tempting young Eves, who go by a score of names: sometimes they are Wellington's "Dear Jenny", sometimes Swift's Esthers, sometimes Napoleon's two wives. Most often they are the Maggies, after Magdalene and the magazine wall.

The Maggies melt into all the temptresses in *Finnegans Wake* and are ultimately to be identified with Earwicker's daughter Issy and Issy's "grateful sister reflection in a mirror" (*FW* 220.9), whose name is "sester Maggy" (*FW* 458.10) or "Madge, my linkingclass girl" (*FW* 459.4). The relation between the Maggies, on the one hand, and Issy and her image, on the other, has bothered critics of *Finnegans Wake* because the temptresses are two Maggies while a single Maggy is addressed in the wonderful letter from Boston, Mass. As Mr. Edmund Wilson observes: "The letter comes from Boston . . . and seems to have been written by some female relation. . . . One feels that there is a third woman in the story, and that something important depends on this."

Like Mr. Wilson, I was plagued by the feeling that there was a third woman in *Finnegans Wake,* intimately connected with Anna Livia, the mother, and Issy, the daughter, but not precisely identified with either one of them. I felt that the clue lay in the personality of Issy, who destroys her father and—as the new generation—gives him eternity.

Issy is identified with Anna Livia because she is her mother's past and future, but mother and daughter are distinct, positively

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

opposed, in the present. Issy is profane, Anna Livia domestic love; Issy is diversity, the leader of the seven rainbow girls among whom Earwicker "spenth his strenth" before he married the unified Anna Livia (*FW* 102.22-27, 215.19-24). The rhythm of Anna Livia's speech is calm, deeply integrated; Issy's is nervous, jerky, and tense. Here she is, speaking to her image, who plays Isolde of the White Hands to Issy's Isolde of Ireland.

> Listénest, meme mearest! They were harrowd, those finweeds! Come, rest in this bosom! So sorry you lost him, poor lamb! Of course I know you are a viry vikid girl to go in the dreemplace and at that time of the draym and it was a very wrong thing to do, even under the dark flush of night, dare all grandpassia! (*FW* 527)

Joyce surrounds Issy and her reflection with references to *Alice Through the Looking-glass.* The Alices who are "yung and easily freudened" (*FW* 115.22-23) are Issy-Maggy; and one character observes: "Nircississies are as the doaters of inversion. Secilas [Alices] through their laughing classes becoming poolermates in laker life" (*FW* 526-27). Another agrees that this is the way with Issies, too.

Alice, however, has no mirror image; and in certain passages of *Finnegans Wake,* notably 457-461, it seemed to me that Issy goes beyond narcissism and speaks of her image as separate from herself, a rival on whom she plays nasty little tricks. Further, she often says that it is "sester Maggy", not Issy, who does naughty things.

It occurred to me that Issy might well be one of those girls with a multiple personality, and I was led, therefore, to read Dr. Morton Prince's *The Dissociation of a Personality* (Boston, 1905, 1908), a study of the young woman known as "Miss Christine L. Beauchamp".

In *The Dissociation of a Personality* I hoped to find evidence that Joyce used Miss Beauchamp as a model for Issy and referred to or echoed Prince in *Finnegans Wake;* for I felt this would prove that Issy was indeed meant to be a multiple personality. I found the echoes and references, but I also found out why the wonderful letter of *Finnegans Wake* comes from Boston.

Miss Beauchamp (pronounced Beecham) was a cultivated New England girl whose personality was rocked on its foundation one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stormy night when she saw an old friend, William Jones ("the embodiment of the spiritual") peeping from the top of a ladder[1] into the hospital where Miss B. was in nurse's training. Jones followed this up by attempting to make love to her at the hospital door, whereupon the decisive split in her personality occurred. She eventually became the patient of Dr. Morton Prince, a Boston neurologist, who hypnotised Miss B. and summoned from her depths, first one and then another distinct personality.

The first of these, B III or Sally (B II was the self in hypnosis) is most important in relation to *Finnegans Wake*. Prince identifies Sally as the subconscious self. Sally was an entrancing girl—gay, unconventional, witty, impish, and sweet—the sort of girl that male writers have hopefully been creating since the beginning of literature. Joyce borrowed a good deal of Sally's behavior for Issy, but he did not borrow her personality, for Issy is an uneasy whole with conflicting parts; Sally, a part wrenched from the whole, was marvelously integrated. In any case, Sally was lovable and merry, but Prince was obliged to be "severe" with her because Sally, who claimed always to have coexisted with Miss B., had always disliked her. Miss B. went in for good books, domestic tasks, and prayer; Sally was active, adventurous, liked men and —what horrified Miss B.—adored the abominable Jones, wanted to "stay with him and love him for always". Jones-the-spiritual had bored Sally, but Jones-the-ladder-climber was infinitely attractive. The act that morality and law condemn caused Sally to love.

She was far from loving Miss B. and tormented her constantly with spiteful tricks and disturbing letters:

> I am positively ashamed of you, my sainted Christine, that you should pretend to be shocked because I choose to go to - - - with poor dear W. . . . Your prayer book is in the salt-box, covered way up, if you want it. Perhaps you'd better rescue it so you can pray out of it. . . . The Margaret Margaret [some paper work of Miss B.'s] is all gone too. I made cigarette papers out of it. . . . (Prince, 126-27)

Sally made Miss B. stutter, sent her hallucinations, jumbled her letters, tore them up (see FW 307 note 5), tried to cut off her hair so she would "look a guy". But she would quickly repent

[1] "Stiltstunts on Bostion, Moss" (FW 347.13), Joyce calls it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and write notes like the following to Prince, who gradually replaced Jones in her affections:

> Know all men by these presents that I, Sally, being of sound mind . . . do hereby solemnly promise to love, honor, and obey Morton Prince, M.D. . . of Boston, state of Massachusetts, from this time forth, *toujours*. *Toujours* is French, you know. (Prince, 138)

Some time after Sally appeared, Prince summoned up another personality, B IV, who was a kind of mirror image of Miss B. Prince has a list several pages long, showing how Miss B. was patient, IV impatient; one liked oysters, the other didn't; one wore her hair high, the other low, etc. (Prince 288-294). These three females had a very trying social life. On one occasion:

> B IV, in a depressed . . . angry frame of mind was looking at herself in the mirror. She was combing her hair. . . . Suddenly she saw, notwithstanding the seriousness of her thoughts, a curious, laughing expression—a regular diabolical smile—come over her face. It was not her own expression, but one that she had never seen before . . . (This expression I recognized from the description to be the peculiar smile of Sally. . . .) IV . . . seemed to recognize it as the expression of the thing that possessed her. She saw herself as another person in the mirror and was frightened. . . . It suddenly occurred to her to talk to this . . . "other person" in the mirror. . . . (Prince, 360-61)

Now here is Issy, talking not to, but about her image:

> . . . nurse Madge, my linkingclass girl, [*Miss B. was a nurse and Sally a looking-glass girl—see also FW 556*] she's a fright, poor old dutch, in her sleeptalking [*Sally witnessed, like a spectator at a play, Miss B. acting and speaking in her dreams*] when I paint the measles on her and mudstuskers to make her a man. [*Sally played this kind of trick on Miss B., but the idea of a man existing within a woman is probably derived from Jung*] We. We. Issy done that, I confesh. . . . Simply killing, how she tidies her hair! [*Miss B. and IV found each other's hair dress absurd and always rearranged it*] I call her Sosy because she's sosiety for me and she says sossy while I say sassy and she says will you have some more scorns while I say won't you take a few more schools and she talks bout ithel dear while I simply never talk about athel darling [*The opposition of Miss B. and IV*] she's but nice for enticing my friends. . . . (*FW* 459)

The words "Issy done that, I confesh" also echo Prince. He had concluded that the "Real Miss Beauchamp" could be achieved by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

integrating Miss B. and IV. Indeed, he found they were already integrated in B II, the self in hypnosis; but whenever he told II to awake, she behaved like a "dement". Finally, he persuaded Sally to let him put her out of existence, and Sally, wanting to be helpful, told him that she believed that II was the "Real Miss Beauchamp":

> I reminded Sally that that had been my theory . . . but . . . when I told II to open her eyes and awake . . . she went into a condition of mental disintegration . . . became rattled and the victim of hallucinations. . . . Sally laughed and a look of mischief came over her face. Finally, *she confessed*, "*I did that* [italics mine], I did it to make you think it wasn't she, and to prevent your getting her." (Prince, 519)

Sure enough, this is the solution, the happy ending that rings down the curtain on a more or less integrated Miss Beauchamp, cured of the split that Joyce calls the "Royal Divorce", and with "all her myriads of drifting minds in one" (*FW* 159.7). Miss B. was integrated but she had no recollection of herself as Sally, and indeed had never known Sally except by her letters.

The letter from Boston, Mass. haunts the pages of *Finnegans Wake*. This letter is described by Joyce as "selfpenned to one's other" (*FW* 489.33-34), and he says slyly that a really close inspection of the letter would reveal "a multiplicity of personalities" (*FW* 107.24-25). The letter gets nearly as much attention in *Finnegans Wake* as the crime in the park, and it is concerned with the crime, always reiterating "Maggy well", "Well Maggy". Moreover, Shaun, one of Earwicker's sons, declares that the letter, among other things, tells "How there wore two Madges. . . ." (*FW* 420.7).

The letter is continually written, read, yearned for, discovered, mulled over. It was:

> . . . carried of Shaun, son of Hek, written of Shem, brother of Shaun, uttered for Alp, mother of Shem, for Hek, father of Shaun. (*FW* 420)

Shem, another of the Earwicker boys, is most often mentioned as author, but always with the proviso that he wrote at his mother, Anna Livia's dictation, and wrote not to, but *for* his father. Near the end of her life, however, Anna Livia claims authorship. "Sometimes then, somewhere there, I wrote me hopes and buried the page. . ." (*FW* 624.3-4). Actually there is nothing contradic-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tory in these claims since Shem is James Joyce, the artist, who gives form to his mother's secrets. It is her letter, she wrote it when she was the young, multiple Issy, and as the mature unified Anna Livia, she cannot just lay her hands on it. It was buried sometime, somewhere.

The letter comes to light on a winter's day when a little hen digs it up from a manure pile (*FW* 110). Its interment had done it no good, and only bits and fragments can be made out (*FW* 111) and these vary from time to time. Nevertheless, the letter always comes from Boston, Mass. and repeats "Well Maggy". It is treated as a document of high importance, a promise of spring to a wintry world. Certain commentators have taken the Boston address and the letter's mention of "tea" to be a reference to the Boston Tea-Party and concluded that the message is one of democratic hope from the new world. Nothing could be less in keeping with Joyce's thought, for he was not given to equating hope with political experiments, and throughout *Finnegans Wake* he follows Ibsen's early play *Love's Comedy* and equates tea and sexual love.

It was in Boston that Sally wrote many letters to her "other", and when Prince persuaded her to leave Miss B., she was writing the story of her life, "The Autobiography of a Subconscious Self". At the prospect of extinction, Sally refused to give Prince the ending of this story:

> She was ready to . . . give up . . . the sunshine of life, but her sorrow should be her own. . . . People, before they died, wrote their "last will and testament" . . . so she must write hers. . . . I never saw it, but I heard about it from IV who was puzzled by what she read. . . . Then Sally wrote a number of letters, stating her opinions about people. These and various other papers, the last pages of the "auto", letters from her friends . . . and presents given her . . . all these she gathered together and put into a box. Then going far out into the country, in a secret place in a wood, she buried her box of treasures. . . . (Prince, 487-88)

A footnote to this passage says:

> In later days this buried box of letters was a source of great anxiety to IV, who feared that some one might accidentally come across it—and what might it not reveal!

Anna Livia's letter was also once part of a larger hoard of spoil which, like Sally, she collected and buried.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> . . . sing the day we sallybright. She's borrowed the coacher's headlight the better to pry . . . and all spoiled goods go into her nabsack . . . boaston nightgarters and masses of shoesets and nickelly nacks and foder allmicheal . . . and midgers and maggets . . . and the last sigh that come fro the hart . . . and the fairest sin the sunsaw. . . . With Kiss. Kiss Criss. Cross Criss. Kiss Cross. Undo lives 'end. Slain. (*FW* 11)

Here the mention of Sally, Boston, Criss (Sally's usual name for Miss Beauchamp was "Chris"),[2] and the suggestion that she who buried the treasure was "slain", tie this passage to Prince's book.

"All the world's in want and is writing a letters," Joyce says. On p. 279 Issy writes a letter to her professor that sounds a good deal like those that Sally wrote to Prince. Like Sally, Issy accuses her mentor of "severity"; like Miss Beauchamp, she is thinking of "putting an end to myself and my malody"; and again, like Sally she says near the end of her letter "Amum. Amum. And Amum again", an echo of Sally's commonly used "Amen, amen, amen". (See also *FW* 495.33.)

And on the very next page, 280, the child Issy practices, as from a model letter-writer, composing the letter from Boston that it will one day be her prime business to write. She ends it:

> With best from cinder Christinette if prints chumming, can be when desires Soldi. . . .

Combined with Cinderella,[3] herself a girl of two personalities, this practice letter is signed by little Christine Beauchamp (chumming . . . be). It says: with best from the sender, Christine, who, chumming with Prince (or charming Prince), can be Soldi (Sally) when she wants to be (or when she feels desire). "Soldi" is, of course, an anagram of Isold, whose name is often scrambled or written backward in *Finnegans Wake* in imitation of mirror-writing. Another anagram, "peethrolio" follows closely on "Soldi" and suggests that Joyce is imitating Sally's fondness for scrambling letters in the notes that Miss. B. wrote to Prince. Issy

---

[2]"Chriesty" also appears in the letter, 111.14. References to Sally are to be found on: 11.17 and 35; 144.34; 200.19; 204.15; 272.10; 280.23; 281.21; 293 note 2; 359.18; 364.30; 609.12.

[3]Prince, 412: "As Cinderella, when the princess's robes were stripped from her, found herself suddenly in rags, so did IV, when her own emotions and thoughts—her own individuality—were stripped from her, find herself in the rags (as she thought) of her other self."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

remarks elsewhere that she will be the "mort" of her "prince" (*FW* 460.12, 22).

The dual Issy, the twin Eves, very nearly are the death of Earwicker. They lure him to his fall in Phoenix Park, a fall that sets the citizenry against him in hate and derision, that delivers him into the hands of an angry God, that riddles him with the guilt which is manifest in his betraying stutter and the hump he carries on his back. But the letter that one young temptress wrote to her "other" can save him. To her, it was "the fairest sin the sunsaw".

The discovery that there is no expression of man's sexual energy that can displease the essential woman was apparently the great revelation of Joyce's life. Both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are resolved by the cry of the eternal female, "*O felix culpa!*" Molly and Anna Livia are vessels of the cosmic secret and much possessed of Nature. They stand outside the moral and theological schemes that man erects to his torment. Joyce called Molly's soliloquy "Leopold Bloom's passport to eternity". The letter from Boston, Mass. is just such a passport. The dying Anna Livia, who knows that "all men has done something", says to her husband:

> When the moon of mourning is set and gone. Over Glinaduna . . . Ourselves, oursouls alone. At the site of salvocean. And watch would the letter you're wanting be coming may be. And cast ashore. That I prays for. . . . Scratching it and patching at with a prompt from a primer. And what scraps of nutsnolleges I pecked up me meself. Every letter is a hard but yours sure is the hardest crux ever. . . . But once done, dealt and delivered, tattat, you're on the map. Rased on traumscrapt from Maston, Boss. (*FW* 623.27-36)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THOMAS H. CARTER

The Pressure of Unreality

NEVER IN OUR RECENT HISTORY has there been a greater necessity for that rare bird, the detached spectator, nor has there been a time when his chances for survival were less propitious. If our advances in technology have made possible increased facility in transportation and communication, they have also made us passionately partisan on almost any question, whether we know anything about it or not. It is difficult at any time for the disinterested individual, suspicious of both sides, to make his opinion heard, or if heard, to have it taken seriously; far more unfortunate, in an epoch when all of us feel a personal concern in events in any locality, is the fact that our present state of culture is unlikely to *produce* the detached spectator. We *care* too much.

By this I do not mean that there are not thousands of people attempting to understand our cultural configurations in their entirety, or who are trying in fact not only to comprehend but to reach a position where manipulation will be possible. Ours may indeed be the threshold for the golden age of social planning; but it is a notion which I, like Mr. Allen Tate, must resent, because I don't want to be manipulated, and also because it could just as easily be the gateway to an Orwellian nightmare—not that we aren't close already. Mr. Tate (and before him, Mr. Pound and others) has understood the ramifications which the decay of language must have on society. As language ceases to have precise meaning and each person acquires his private reality, abstract communication becomes impossible. (To be assured of understanding, you can always point.) We cannot know whether the fault begins in a confusion of language or a confusion of society (or, which is more likely, a confusion of both), and we do not really need to know. We need merely to realise that we are crippled.

The purpose of this note is to inquire into the extent of this crippling process, not on the man of letters, though he is compromised too, but on what I am forced to call the "average" man, the man of some intelligence and education who has not made it his business to wonder about the workings of language or of societal patterns.

The United States is a country of semi-literate people, which is to say that its inhabitants can read but not very well; they are not even aware of the various pressures of unreality by which they are besieged through every conceivable kind of mass medium. Mr. H. M. McLuhan, in *The Mechanical Bride*[1], is very much to the point:

> Ours is the first age in which many thousands of the best-trained in-

[1]THE MECHANICAL BRIDE, by *Herbert Marshall McLuhan*. Vanguard. $4.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> dividual minds have made it a full-time business to get inside the collective public mind. To get inside in order to manipulate, exploit, control is the object now. And to generate heat not light is the intention. To keep everybody in the helpless state engendered by prolonged mental rutting is the effect of many ads and entertainment alike.

It is a little ironic that elsewhere in his book Mr. McLuhan, himself obviously aware of the dangers and infection of the ad man's rhetoric, once or twice indulges in "journalese"; I mention this, not in scorn of Mr. McLuhan (who has come closer to calling his shot than anyone else I know) but to illustrate the difficulty of freeing one's mind from the contagion of corrupted language thrust constantly against the consciousness. Our present effort, however, should be to examine the accuracy of his statement and the possible effects of the situation on the public mentality.

When Mr. David Riesman published *The Lonely Crowd*[2], the book drew a certain amount of dissent from the professional anthropologists, but everyone was both pleased and gratified that here, at last, was a work on society (specifically, the American character) that avoided pseudo-scientific jargon and was easily read, easily understood—and not about the aborigine of Australia! The idea that there is something distinctively *American* about us is so comforting these days.

Mr. Riesman and his associates divide the American population into three character-structure groups. *Tradition-directed* people live in a relatively stable culture whose mores are considered satisfactory; the individual is important only as he is a part of society. Changes in cultural character are equated with changes in the population-curve; tradition-directed character is the result of static population. The *inner-directed* individual, on the other hand, is found in a stage of rapid population growth. He is our typical American of the popular myth, the rugged individualist. His goals are implanted by his elders, but he is counseled from the start that it is his duty to make a name for himself, to be unique, self-driving, ambitious; let your conscience be your guide. In the third category Mr. Riesman finds the beginnings of significant change; here is perhaps the future American character. The *other-directed* person appears in a time of incipient population decline. Emphasis is not toward the individual but the "gang", toward conformity. At his most characteristic, the other-directed person is involved in some type of bureaucracy or service job. His conduct is determined by what he can sense of the changing values of society, not exactly a simple job in the most cut-and-dried situation. Small wonder he has a neurosis.

To all this the professional sociologist raised two objections. First, the equation of character with population stages could never be proved. And

[2]THE LONELY CROWD, by *David Riesman*. Yale. $4.00. Reissued (in abridged version) by Doubleday, Anchor Books.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

second, an inadequate number of people had been examined, a charge which has also done much to discredit Dr. Kinsey and his sex-surveys. (As we know, the sociologist is trying very hard to escape the pseudo-science tag and cannot afford to go out on limbs, no matter how small or attractive.)

Mr. McLuhan deplores the effects of technology and its corollary, the specious rhetoric of advertising, on our sensibility. Both he and Mr. Riesman receive some unexpected confirmation from the villain, industry itself. *Creating an Industrial Civilization*[3] is a report on the Corning Conference, which Mr. Eugene Staley describes in this way:

> Nearly one hundred leaders from the world of industry and the world of learning—from management, labor, government, arts and professions, science, and humanistic studies—met in a conference on "Living in Industrial Civilization" at Corning, New York, on May 17-19, 1951. What they talked over, earnestly and intensively, in round-table groups of twenty to twenty-five each, was not how to produce more goods, make more profits, get higher wages, nor even how to resist the world challenge of communism—though the discussion had some relevance to all these matters. Their concern was to take a candid look at our industrial civilization from the standpoint of *human values*. How good, in human terms, is this industrial life we have created? What has man lost and what has he gained since he has given up making products with his hands to make them by machine? *Where do we go from here?* [Final italics are mine.—T. C.]

Where, indeed?

All these, of course, are very good questions, and we must be grateful that the earnest gentlemen at Corning have asked them. Since it has been some time since man gave up "making products with his hands" and since the participants in the Corning conference are presumably human, we are perhaps entitled to wonder why they have not got around to asking these questions before. Mr. Staley provides the answer:

> The fact that it took place under the joint sponsorship of an industrial corporation and a national organization for humanistic research testifies both to the growing sense of responsibility of industry and to a growing sense of responsibility on the part of the "intellectuals"—philosophers, historians, social scientists, psychologists, and humanistic scholars generally—to relate their studies to man's past and his creative spirit to the practical problems of today's civilization.

In other words, what Mr. Staley may believe to be our two most irresponsible elements are at last facing up to facts. Better late than never, no doubt. I could wish Mr. Staley would tell us exactly what he means by "humanistic", or, for that matter, "intellectual". By placing the latter word between inverted

---

[3]CREATING AN INDUSTRIAL CIVILIZATION, edited by *Eugene Staley*. Harper. $4.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

commas, I suppose Mr. Staley implies that he has in mind the academic mentality, or perhaps the cliché professor, a subversive breed we of course deplore.

In any case, industry and the intellectuals have gone on record as admitting the desirability of human values (we do not know exactly what they are, but let that pass). Mr. Staley indicates that this is a step forward. The report of the conference displays, as might be expected, the opposite viewpoint from that of Mr. McLuhan; none the less, it seems to me to be the reverse side of precisely the same coin.

The problems considered by the conference are instructive. As we have seen, the basic premise is the necessity for human values in an industrial civilization; they are, I presume, equally desirable for *any* civilization. The question, then, is how the great father of us all, industry, is to instill these values. Or, to put it another way, since most Americans are involved in some phase of industry, how to give their daily lives—the assembly-line existence—significance? Obviously, to make the worker feel he is part of the whole, that only he can properly screw this particular bolt. This is not enough, however; the worker must enjoy a sense of community, which industrial civilization itself has done most to destroy. The conference also spent much discussion on making the worker's *leisure* time more meaningful. (No stone unturned!) Neither the intellectuals nor the industrialists, of course, could supply any definitive answers; but agreement on the *problems* was close to unanimity. If they can be solved, then we may have that "Confidence in Life in Industrial Civilization" which all the participants seem to agree we need.

The basic assumption of the Corning conference can reasonably, I think, be restated in the terms of a question: How and with what, to make them better satisfied (hence more satisfactory workers), are we going to fill all these hollow heads?

While industry is pondering the answer, we are left with another question: Exactly what, at present, is occupying the hollow head? Mr. McLuhan, backed by some truly devastating documentation, provides a persuasive analysis. *The Mechanical Bride* is about

> . . . the folklore of industrial man, so much of which stems from the laboratory, the studio, and the advertising agencies. But amid the diversity of our inventions and abstract techniques there will be found a great degree of cohesion and unity. This consistency is not conscious in origin or effect and seems to arise from a sort of collective dream.

Whereas Mr. Riesman or Dr. Kinsey base their conclusions on interview polls and are thus vulnerable to charges of being unrepresentative, inaccurate, Mr. McLuhan uses a different approach altogether; his book displays reproductions of the ads, books, comic strips, etc. which he discusses. The razzle-dazzle machine-gun methods of contemporary advertising have had, he finds, a disastrous effect on society:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> The ordinary person senses the greatness of the odds against him even without thought or analysis, and he adapts his attitudes unconsciously. A huge passivity has settled upon industrial society. For people carried about in mechanical vehicles, earning their living by waiting on machines, listening much of the waking day to canned music, watching packaged movie entertainment and capsulated news, for such people it would require an exceptional degree of awareness and an especial heroism of effort to be anything but supine consumers of processed goods. Society begins to take on the character of the kept woman whose role is expected to be submission and luxurious passivity.

Although it has been more and more forced, by its own extremes, to resort to the subtlety of sledge-hammers, advertising in its most recurrent forms must have some access to the "collective dream", that part of our conscious-subconscious mind which makes us susceptible to appeals we do not bother to understand; otherwise, advertising, pragmatic as the science whose aids it appropriates, would be forced to utilize another approach. How does Mr. McLuhan attempt to get at the substance of the dream?

> Ever since Burckhardt saw that the meaning of Machiavelli's method was to turn the state into a work of art by the rational manipulation of power, it has been an open possibility to apply the method of art analysis to the critical evaluation of society. That is attempted here. The Western world, dedicated since the 16th Century to the increase and consolidation of the power of the state, has developed an artistic unity of effect which makes aesthetic criticism of the effect quite possible.

That is, in studying society, as in studying a complex work of art, it is a legitimate procedure for us to use any critical method which helps us better to get at the entire meaning. One of Mr. McLuhan's most valuable insights is that discontinuity is the key to both *Finnegans Wake* and the front page of a newspaper. The fact that unrelated items of equal importance when placed side by side make each other intelligible is already known to those familiar with modern art or literature. The point, however, is that this juxtaposition must not only be seen, but be seen whole *and* in relation to its parts. Its effect is most obvious in visual terms—in this instance, several ads studied together.

In a sense, *The Mechanical Bride* is robbed of its full force by resembling the classification room of a botanist who hasn't completely correlated his flora. Still, Mr. McLuhan's is a pioneer study, and his argument lies in his exhibits. Both his methods and his conclusions seem to me to have such merit that the risk of an abstract is worth taking. As might be expected, *The Mechanical Bride* turns out to be a study of the impact of machines on human rhythms and behavior. Not since Wyndham Lewis developed his theory of "the wild body" has anyone meditated so fruitfully on the similarity of flesh and steel (key-word: pig-iron?). In accepting one aspect of Descartes' dualism for his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

comic fiction, Mr. Lewis denied the existence of significant mind; Mr. McLuhan implies that the American people have denied it to themselves, protecting themselves at all times from the bite of the critical intelligence.

The dominant patterns in advertising, according to Mr. McLuhan, are sex and technology, often related with hectic speed, mayhem, violence, and sudden death. Our complete industrialization with its concomitant dependance on the machine has produced in life rhythms analogous to mechanical function, such as the worship of the body *as mechanism* with the porcelain bathroom (strictly the product of our times) as symbol; this certainly enters into the explanation of the feminine preoccupation with body "hygiene" as well as the masculine cult of body building.[4] The child is taught that virtue is synonymous with proper and orderly excretion and egestion as well as the brushing of the teeth. The machine is errorless, efficient; so must the body be. Hence the interest in Emily Post, the sex-manual, the know-how book. (Or Dr. Kinsey: other-directed people require the sanction of group behavior.)

The sex-manual and the know-how book are symptomatic. Americans have know-how, respect it, want more of it; this is why they buy books on gardening, carpentry, oratory, grammar: they transplant the rhythm of the factory into social behavior. Are not the standardized routines of the chorus line, each girl making the same motions at the same time, the harmonies of the smoothly-functioning shop? The appeal, rather than being erotic, is almost of an aesthestic nature; the feeling is satisfaction, not desire.

The woman, in short, is conceived of as a love-*machine* (in undergraduate terminology, a sex-box). Her charm is that she is like every other American woman: she is gloriously replaceable!

The power complex augmented beyond itself by the impact of the machine has some interesting results on sex. The effectiveness of ads stressing the deadly attraction of breasts and legs lies in what Mr. McLuhan euphemistically calls female envy of the male sex organ. The female attempt to make the breasts and legs into a substitute power organ has a further tendency to dissociate one part of the body from another, as is done in a hosiery display. We need not go all the way with Mr. McLuhan—he states himself that he does not understand all the patterns—to know that he is very close to something important; he has at last flushed the fox. He notes "a hungry curiosity to explore and enlarge the domains of sex by mechanical technique, and, on the other hand, to *possess* machines in a sexually gratifying way." Consider, for the latter instance, the automobile ad drawn up in sex imagery: "bodies by Fisher", etc. In this connection, it is interesting to remember Cummings' poem in which copulation is described in terms normally applied to the test run of a new car. Elsewhere,

[4]It is a sociological commonplace that all parts of culture are so related that it is, practically, impossible to know, in regard to historical process, the exact influence of closely linked factors on one another.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. McLuhan neatly defines technology as a confusion of ends and means; the sex and technology tangle is as wry a demonstration of the point as I can think of.

The advertising concentration on speed is accounted for partially by the increased rate of living; the ambiguous design of the modern car arises from its attempt to be both womb *and* phallic symbol, this last being equally a power symbol. Death and war, however, present something of a problem. The difficulty of the coffin-manufacturer is solved by an ad which demonstrates how dry and comfortable the product is—a sort of superior womb, one might say. War is made compatible by mechanization, the superimposition on death and destruction of the patterns of the machine.

This rape of the sensibility, fortunately, has not taken place without some resistance, even though it is shadow-like: Charlie McCarthy as the ghost of freedom opposing Bergen, the voice of technological authority. Modern man, allowed only fragmentary response to truncated experience, fights back in day dreams: impotent Clark Kent becomes Superman, a being outside of society. On virtually the same level is the popularity of killer Mike Hammer, a superman without essential innocence; the dream is degraded and the sadistic Hammer becomes a machine of destruction. Still, he achieves his ends outside of conventional mores, with a freedom that ordinary people must envy. No wonder that the gangster is the popular tragic hero; he represents the success ideal overtly betrayed by society. In an industrial culture which has but one accepted pattern for success, the success drive itself is to some extent inevitably destructive.

Of the three books I have mentioned, only Mr. McLuhan's suggests the possibility that industrial man may save himself; the others would do it by planning from without. Yet Mr. McLuhan (who is the closest we are likely to get to a detached spectator) can only hope that if we become aware of the process, we can somehow reverse the trend. In the meantime, the buzz of the dynamo grows louder and louder. It is no surprise that we cannot hear that poetry whose purpose, in Allen Tate's phrase, is to delight the ear and remind us of the hour of our death.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SONYA RUDIKOFF

Some Masters and Some Others

Theirs was the giant race, before the flood.

FOR, THEY ARE OUR MODERN MASTERS—Picasso, Braque, Miro, Léger, and some of the other painters whose work has been shown during this last winter season. And Mr. Paul Rosenberg is not only a dealer, but a modern master-collector as well. There was something very pleasant simply about the fact of his fine personal collection, which was shown in a benefit exhibit at his new galleries in East 79th Street. Bigness is pervasive in our cultural as well as our business life, and in the arts we encounter the phenomenon—no older than modern painting itself—of the big museum. And, sometimes, dearly as we love them, the museums can come to seem like insatiable monsters, taking or getting everything, leaving nothing free to change hands. (It is true, of course, that their generous loans, their hospitality, and their traveling exhibitions temper their immobility—and that privacy has its own excesses.) So it refreshes us to see paintings that have no institutional provenance, paintings which still can move from one collection to another or be owned by a single person who likes them. In the dealer's or collector's sense, a painting is dead once it becomes part of a museum's collection, and even if those who don't buy pictures or sell them feel less deprived, there is surely a bleak finality of possession in a museum. Mrs. Gardner made certain that nothing was to be added to *her* collection, and none of her arrangements changed, which makes Fenway Court like the kind of place one of John Evelyn's friends might have designed, a mad personal museum. Mr. Rosenberg is less flamboyant, but he does not show his treasures publicly and will not sell them. A private collection has this one great virtue: it is centered in some one person's personal taste, which gives it an identity that no corporate taste can provide (even if, for Mrs. Gardner, some of the taste was Berenson's). Of course, museums are important to have, and it is no criticism of them to say that they are not personal, but in this age of bigness we don't usually, as a natural thing, recognize and value and praise the small collection.

And we should, especially when it has so many lovely paintings as Mr. Rosenberg's does. Picasso and Braque are the stars of it, which will surprise no one, but there are also the Matisse *Checker Players,* the lovely Bonnard *Interior with Work Table,* a Redon, and Renoir's magnificent *La Source* whose face is fuzzy but whose body is beautifully painted. And the drawings are of great interest. The great surprise was that so many wonderful paintings, for years identified only as "from a private collection", should turn out to be Mr. Rosenberg's. One cannot "quote" paintings as one may do with prose or poetry (this is only one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the most obvious difficulties in talking about pictures); it would be nice to have a whole section of plates here to stand for quotations, but I'm afraid I shall have to mention the pictures in the ordinary way.

It is right that Mr. Rosenberg's Picassos should be complemented by his lovely Braques, for each often supplies something lacking in the other. For example, Picasso can seem too satisfied with a simple statement, a rash extravagance, a bold conflict set up in the center of a canvas, not leading out to the edges of a painting. He doesn't always take account of the whole picture, and this seems a kind of impatience or negligence more than that intended purposeful ambiguity which he can also communicate so well. You feel this when he has obviously made some attempt with the space and it doesn't come off, or when he does something quick with colour that doesn't succeed on any level. The 1918 *Harlequin "Si tu veux"* shows it: only the artificial painted-in frame gives a sense of closure and not even then; the whole painting is not involved in the moving planes of the center, and not discreetly *un*involved either, or commenting on the center, but simply not "working". Picasso's small still-lifes of 1919, 1922, and 1923 are stiff and tricky, and even a little dead next to the 1926 *Bottle of Wine,* which is fluent and jammed, full of delicate, sharp, intense wrenches between the planes. In *The Red Tablecloth,* 1924, there is more simplicity, and the brilliant mass of drapery sails, twists, circles through the painting almost unstopped, holding, cupping, changing every object it touches, and completely in control. In contrast, the Braque still-lifes, especially those of the Twenties, make you use words like aqueous, deft, lambent, milky, lovely—all of them pertinent and necessary. And you always have a whole painting to deal with, a bowl going off at the top, a peripheral life that acts on the fruit in the center, and the fruit, if pale, is not sweet in colour. In *Figs and Grapes* 1922 there are some greens that are incredible, and in the two flower pieces of 1925 there is a very Dutch kind of light in the anemones. Yet it is true that Braque has his own pit-falls; if Picasso is often incomplete, Braque can be too complete. This you can see in *The Blue Tablecloth* 1938 and the pendant *Pink Tablecloth.* The undulating edge of that magic cloth is too superficially pleasing, it blocks you too much from the back which has a point and is successful; then when you turn from the *Blue* to the *Pink* the problem is resolved in terms of tastefulness and subtlety. Something has been lost, and you may feel that Braque pays too high a price for taste; what makes the Bonnard so lovely is that it is *not* perfect. In spite of their life of twenty-five years or more, very few of the paintings looked "old"; only two Légers I saw on the way out, of 1921 and 1929, had that old-fashioned quality: in one, the woman with her ribbon of undulating patent-leather hair, and in the other, a dim sandy colour like old linen or a box full of old *Hound & Horns.*

This was not so true of the pictures in the great retrospective Léger show at the Museum of Modern Art, or of the possibly better, although smaller,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Léger exhibit at the Saidenberg Gallery. The Museum show began with Léger's very early work and went through to the large *Leisure* and *The Builders* and the Audincourt windows. The selection at Saidenberg covered a narrower range but was especially rich in examples from the Forties which—especially those of 1947, '48, and '49—was one of Léger's best, most lyrical, and most interesting periods. (It is surely a point of some relevance to our thoughts of influence, cultural climate and inspiration that Léger spent the war years in America.) Yet if one has a certain dislike for his "mechanical" period, as I often have had, the Museum's examples even overcame that, and there remains, for me at least, only the painting of about 1925-30 that does not seem interesting. I had forgotten how very exciting and full a picture like *The City* was, how complex and how pleasing; and the monumental women have great tenderness, especially in *Two Nudes on a Red Background* 1923, *The Readers* 1924, and *Le Grand Déjeuner* 1921. I say tenderness because for someone who intends only an inexpressive plastic use of the human figure, Léger manages to give their compositional strength some curious overtones of open feeling. The eyes of those figures are remarkable, following you from room to room, looking directly at you, like the eyes of the Raphael sibylls. They are not "supposed" to do that, but they do, and without interfering, or disturbing their forms in space. But it is true then that a large painting like *The Builders,* which has more openness, more of a complex, airy, interlocking structure, is more like some early work—such a picture can seem incomplete, in a fleeting way, because there are no eyes like those of *Leisure* or *Three Musicians,* where you are especially drawn to the man with his face down. The eyes are not beautiful, and Léger does not paint "beautiful" things; if he makes a beautiful picture, that quality has some other source than the objects. In *Leisure* the women sprawl, there is that amusing inscription *Hommage à Louis David* on a paper one of them holds, and in fact the whole picture has a kind of ludicrous amusement, as when a family group on a picnic poses for a photograph in the midst of a silly, funny outing, the women in "play-clothes", someone with a hat and a moustache holding a solemn little girl.

Léger is now 73 but I cannot feel that his recent work is necessarily his best; the work of 1910-25 and of the Forties interests me more, even if it is less obviously thick and strong. Of course, there is no reason why a painter's last work *should* be his best, except that it conforms to our comfortable image of the artist; but the falseness of that image of mature success can cloud our insight. It is perfectly possible for someone to become interested late in conceptions which might have been treated more profitably before, or to become interested too early in conceptions not appropriate to one's training or temperament or level of feeling. Perhaps no painter has articulated, as Eliot has for poetry, in his essay on Yeats, the problems of painting at various ages or stages, but then it may not be possible to do so.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Léger's latest work, however, doesn't communicate the self-consciousness of an intended maturity as Picasso's does. Both at Curt Valentin's recent Picasso show and, on a larger scale, in Rome last spring, Picasso's newly exhibited work seems to assert with great proud violence, "This is my late period", and to insist on its comparison with the late periods of all great masters. There is the expected calm, the resolution, the playfulness, the greater simplicity, the appropriate sureness; and some of the landscapes even tend to dissolve almost in the way late Cézannes do. Everything is intended to stand for the peace of mature creativity, and there are the examples of sculpture, ceramics, and lithograph, to show how the mature artist extends his creativity instead of its contracting or vaporizing. I found a great deal of sillness in this late work, however, and a lot of slickness. Picasso knows what he can do well and he often has done only that, depending on his strength to carry him. There is always strength in everything he does, but sometimes it is only that, as if he were showing his muscles. The later lyricism and sweetness can be affecting, but it can also lead back to his earlier Vertès-like children or back to Mme. Vigée Lebrun. One notices this all the more because of a slick perfection of surface and technique in this late work. What makes the difference between the enormous panels of *War* and *Peace* and the older *Guernica* is not necessarily politics: aside from the banality of *Peace* and the curiously more pleasing scene of *War*, with the jolly sinuous microbes falling off the cart, (with, however, the very unattractive "peace fighter" of no sex at all)—aside from politics, or perhaps because of it, the later production is far more expert, in the worst sense, than the earlier one, and more chic; so much less open, so much less unfinished. I have not seen *Night Fishing at Antibes* yet but some of the recent landscapes at Valentin are striking, even if they have a deceptive simplicity—which in this case means that they are *more* simple than they appear to be. And then one can be newly impressed with the fact that Picasso seems to need a new canvas for every new idea or new variant of the same idea, so each idea goes into countless editions. There are many practical and aesthetic justifications for this, but I am surprised to find it *always* taken for a virtue. One of the consequences is that each "edition" is ruled by only one idea; now, just as a strong emotion composes the face, so a single strong conception can appear to compose a painting, up to a point: but each "edition" then partakes of only a part of the insatiable idea; this can be seen especially in some of the pictures of seated women, where whole sections are allowed to remain dead or confused, unarticulated. If Picasso is our Titian, as he is sometimes said to be, what if Titian had done this with *Europa and the Bull*—instead of one great picture, with everything in it, a hundred interesting driven ones?

But if Picasso's late work is not satisfying, it is a delight to find another master, Miro, doing his best work of all now. I wish that plates of some of these new paintings could be reproduced here, for they themselves communicate the best sense of Miro's new qualities, especially a wide short horizontal panel

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which was very high on the wall at the Pierre Matisse Gallery. All of the work is looser and freer, more vibrant, more full; the forms are less symbolic, more expressive, even totemistic; as always, with this painter, there is a strong, flexible, and imaginative use of black: who else uses black so colourfully, so expressively as Miro? Then, these new pictures are less linear, the forms are thicker, more personified in a sense, even though I have said they were less symbolic; there is less of the surrealist symbol. And the colour in all the new work is more immediate, more pungent than before in Miro, especially the rather deep blue of the horizontal panel I mentioned, a blue that isn't a wash, has little variation, and yet is diaphanous and full of movement without being gluey. There is slightly more paint quality in these later works—no impasto or thickish swirls, but a more obvious brush, the outlines less clear or rigid, colour straying more, the surface sensations more independent of the canvas, burlap, or masonite that is their ground. And there is a directness about these new paintings that could still be a useful example to younger painters. On the other hand, Hans Hofmann, whose recent work was shown at the Kootz Gallery, can hold out a frequently easy expedient of imperiousness. Hofmann is perhaps a master-teacher rather than a master-painter, and his importance may rest more in the reactions he sets up in many of his students than in the paintings he does himself. After everything has been said about his paintings—about their push and pull, and their action, and their vitality, and how everything "works", and the necessity for their pure colour—after all of that, there still remains, for me at any rate, the fact that the paintings are often dull or boring, stupefying in their assertions, relentless in their demands. Their dynamism is sometimes all on the surface and you can't get beyond it. In this recent show, *The Red Cap* seemed to me the only truly interesting picture; unlike most of the others, it could bear second views.

This may be the time to say something briefly about the abstract expressionist painting of which we can see so many examples in the New York galleries now. Perhaps it is true that just when this style seems to be most in the ascendant, it is no longer so alive and fruitful as it once was, and perhaps the public can begin to appreciate the whole genre only at the moment when it is being discarded. Item: de Kooning's *Woman;* or the new interest in Soutine; or, among younger painters, Larry Rivers' *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (shown at the de Nagy Gallery), like *Donatello parmi les fauves;* or the talk about "going back to nature"—to which a friend of mine counters, "Yes, but is nature going back to you?" Even if what the public sees now is a detritus rather than a new style burgeoning, this kind of painting has nevertheless been discussed very little. What the painters themselves say about it is not rewarding (except perhaps to other painters), and properly so; painting doesn't and shouldn't explain itself verbally, and painters are, almost by definition, inarticulate. The reviewers mainly—and safely—describe what they see, avoiding

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

comment, evading judgment when they can, because in their obsessive nightmare the painter justly taunts, "*You* laughed at the Armory Show", and for all critics one trauma is certainly dated 1913. Then, too, it is harder for people to have strong views on art now, and especially this art—they may have the simulacra of strong views, strong in animus rather than conviction, and most people would not be able to say that they don't like modern painting at all, perhaps only some young painters working in the Venetian baroque. And a real part of the trouble is that this abstract expressionist painting probes our human vision at its weakest point. E. M. Forster says that the trouble with books is that they must be read; even though some savage tribes may eat them, civilized people practice reading, and reading takes a long time. Seeing, however, takes a very short time; objects of the visual arts have that immediate, primary, tangible existence which distinguishes them from the other arts; and the new style of painting exploits the difficulties of this very difference. The style is characterized by a great deal of vitality on the surface, a vitality that can—or, really, must—be apprehended in the quickest possible glance, for a longer view might be disastrous. Thus, many people respond to this painting, like it, come to look at it, buy it, or argue about it, but there is no large literature of the genre and its reasons, its justifications, its principles are not so well developed or so articulated as, for example, the reasons were for Cubism. (Of course, unless you trace it to Kandinsky, the genre is still young, dating really only from the early- or mid-Forties.) And I even have the sense that for some of the partisans reasons may be destructive—the observed fact that these pictures are painted, their existence, their life, and the experience of them should be sufficient, some people argue; "why talk of reasons or anything else." And this may be a practical position as well, for this painting always intrudes, like Alcibiades at the feast, preventing any talk except in its own terms. Now this is always true whenever Criticism, that *bonne à tout faire,* is at her work—"Art tracks its wet feet across the floor", and anyone who objects puts himself with the aestheticians, in quarantine from all infectious paintings. But this *madness,* this *brute life,* this *scourge* or whatever it shall be—is criticism of it really such an inoculation against feeling, is all talk so useless? I think it can seem so, and the partisans are in some sense right, especially now when there are no images or objects or musical principles or allegories or ideas of balance or patrons', fathers', wives', or children's faces which can represent the painter's intention and feeling. I use "represent" instead of a simpler verb of identity or congruence because that is what these images really did, they interceded for the painter's feeling; a Velasquez portrait of Philip IV was not identical either with that monarch or with the painter's feelings about him. But now, in our abstract expressionist painting, the picture *is* the feeling, and the expressive intention becomes preeminent. It is no wonder that in such naked encounters reasons will seem to be destructive. And the picture is also, or because

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of that an act; so, inevitably, any comment which is more complex than empathy will seem repressive.

Some years ago, in an Ad Reinhardt cartoon, a painting pointed at a man and said "What do *you* mean?" Forestalling the spectator, borrowing every license there is, this is the question that all abstract expressionist painting asks, if it can be said to ask any questions at all. Such a shift is like a semantic gambit by which the winner really loses, for, there, ahead of him, are the Scylla and Charybdis of this genre, decoration and bombast; and not all the defensive assertions can send them away. Size and scale then become insistent and merciless in these pictures, for the sheer monumental can do anything and succeed, in a sense. But I find it rather presumptuous for every painting to act as if it were intended to be *The Last Judgment*. These are larger than altarpieces (and the Donor, instead of praying quietly in a corner, merges with the Artist, is all over the place), they are often as large, almost, as murals; for more than the reasons of their size, they belong on the ceilings of a *palazzo*. The enormity of the surface space, however, does not always support a large conception. At the show of Younger European Painters in the Guggenheim Museum, for example, the monstrous, much-talked-about Mathieu was really very meagre, the more so because it was four times as big as the better, less bombastic, more complex Bazaine, and its size then seemed gratuitous. (For other reasons as well, the Bazaine was one of the best paintings there, I thought.) In fact, very often it is just the impoverished conception which makes you aware of the size of a painting, in the same way that some Vermeers seem larger than they are because they have *so much* in them. Of course, some pictures assert themselves by showing no inherent reason why they should be any size at all—those of Riopelle, and some Pollocks—as if they were simply fields of force arbitrarily sized, refusing really to be limited. Someone says of the work in this style that you can buy it by the yard; but if you don't take that in its pejorative sense alone, it has some aesthetic truth. And a truth which shows again the difficulty in considering this style by means of any analogy with the other arts: half of a Pollock will make a very nice picture indeed, but half of a novel will make only half a novel.

Perhaps the most striking thing about so much of the abstract expressionist painting is its almost unvarying dependence on what Max Friedländer calls, in another connection, a "rhetoric of the self-portrait". But in this genre the self appears not as an objectified image, but *as the picture*, which makes it fantastic. Now when a man reaches into his coat pocket and pulls out a live, throbbing heart to show you he has feelings, you must submit or turn away from this terrible epiphany. This is what some paintings make me do, they are such pure act, such pure feeling, often such pure pain. Yet I think it is a mistake to believe too much is gained by this purity. The claims for it are enormous and extravagant, sometimes compelling, until you look at the paintings

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

themselves, at Clyfford Still's, for example, and find yourself assaulted by such single-mindedness. The older painting used to take account of nature in its own complexity, analyse forms, create depth or the illusion of depth, investigate light or balance or the principles of perception, and so on, *as well as* tap primary feeling. The contemporary abstract expressionists are probably unique in making pictures directly out of primary feelings alone or almost alone. Such feelings are exciting, strong, and vibrant, and some of the pictures in which they star can give real delight; there may even be, sometimes, a kind of elegance, as in Jackson Pollock's *Composition Number 12, 1952*, in Nelson Rockefeller's collection. But the primary feelings, like the primary colours, admit of no variants, no gradations, no refinements, no components; that is almost their definition. And, ultimately,—and one does not like to say this—being so primary, they can bore like nothing else.

I want to say something briefly about several other shows of the winter: Frank Lloyd Wright is clearly a master-architect, but I don't feel competent to make any extended comment on the large exhibition of sixty years of his work, which was set up next to the Guggenheim Museum. For me, some of his earlier houses were more interesting than the later ones, and I am afraid I can't feel quite so happy as he does about the plan for the new museum; it seems to me more wilful than anything else. It was pleasant to go into the house set up there as an adjunct to the show; but there is so much brick in those houses! —and many of them seem liveable only if you have an awful lot of cocktail parties. Perhaps Mr. Wright's clients do, and perhaps also they never want to sit in closed discrete places, *not* on pillows, *without* brick, plywood, or palmy fronds around them, in some dingy room or an attic, to write a letter or a book, or be angry. I wonder if anyone has calculated the changes in our cultural life caused by the disappearance of the attic.

Two shows that deserve more space than I am able to give them were Fifty Years of Mondrian at the Janis Gallery, and Seurat and His Friends at Wildenstein. Both were highly gifted, theoretical painters who were not able to communicate anything of their sensibility to their disciples; who were, in fact, such masters that anything less than being influenced by them and then breaking away could have been disastrous. Each of them was scientific yet their painting was a science that was not transferable. Painters who work like Mondrian can produce only pictures like his, but inferior ones. And, apart from Seurat himself, the most interesting use of his ideas was probably made by Pissarro, Vuillard, and Matisse, who were not really dedicated divisionists, and by Lucie Cousturier, who was only fifteen when Seurat died but who acquired *La Grande Jatte* and kept it in her studio until her death. Only one of her paintings was in the show but it was an interesting one. As for Seurat's other friends, they assist at his successes; it is mostly he himself who takes all the prizes, especially

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for his drawings. Cross would have been better among the *fauves,* and Signac became, perhaps, too much of a propagandist for much of his passion to go into his painting, which grows less interesting, as painting, after the lovely *Two Milliners* of 1885. —And while I speak of French painters, I want to mention another good show, at Fine Arts Associates, of French Art Around 1900. Each of the twenty-six paintings was wonderful in its way and worth some long looks. Among the loveliest were Braque's *View from Hotel Mistral,* Monet's *Jardin à Giverny,* Renoir's *Nude,* and Picasso's *Children in the Luxembourg Garden,* in which some of the painting is like Courbet. And, after all the bad, or only chic, examples of Dufy and Utrillo that I've seen, the Dufy *La Plage du Havre* and Utrillo's *Montmagny* glowed with the very real talents of these two painters.

I had not seen very much of Marino Marini's work before the November exhibit at Curt Valentin, and I find that I liked then the very things about his sculpture that may seem to me now the most sterile. The horses were enchanting at first, full of life and movement, rich and round, making any vulgarity about the equine posterior more of a compliment than an insult. And the figures were very moving, especially in their archaism and in the scratchy surfaces of both horses and figures. Since then I have seen more of Marini's work and these very things begin to seem dull: the horses don't do anything but what they did before, and I'm not sure where the figures lead.

And just a last word about Francis Bacon, whose cardinals and some other paintings were at Durlacher early in the season. He shows some of the characteristic British madness which, in a people so civilized and humane, will come out in curious ways, as in the Christie murders. The madness of Bacon's pictures, as well as the painting of them, reminds me of his compatriot, Graham Sutherland, and both are a little too thin.

GEORGE BARBAROW

Prospective Cinema

THE FIRST COMMERCIALLY SUCCESSFUL EXHIBITION of motion pictures was achieved with the kinetoscope, a slot machine for individual viewing of films. Theatrical exhibition, whereby a single print could be projected before groups of dozens, hundreds, and eventually thousands of people simultaneously, quickly followed, and has remained the dominant mode for fifty years, for obvious reasons of cheapness and convenience. Now another change is imminent. With the practical development of television, nearly every home has its

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

own improved kinetoscope, and the single print is accessible to millions, under conditions of creature comfort that cannot be approached in any theater. The expectation is that moviehouses will disappear altogether, perhaps within ten years.

In desperate defense of their lucrative establishments, the managers of the conventional system of exhibition have introduced novelties, such as 3-D and various wide-screen devices, including Cinerama and CinemaScope. The immediate object is to provide entertainment not available to the televiewer, and thus keep the masses coming into the film theaters. The novelties, old suggestions once rejected as too expensive, add up to mere tinkering with perspective and frame proportion, not altering the basic nature of the cinema, and adaptable to television with relative ease. The most that any astute theater owner can expect of the optical tricks is that they will delay, for a short while, the homeward march of the bulk audience, so that his theater investments may be liquidated in an orderly manner. While the manager is going about his vital business, we may examine the effect that half a century of theatrical exhibition has had upon the form and style of movies.

An esthetically naive population whose first criterion in art is that images must resemble familiar reality, seized upon photography as a particularly satisfying medium, and saw in motion pictures a considerable improvement, a logical extension that was entirely consistent with the crude ideal of literal imitation. There can be small wonder that theatrical exhibition induced, and eventually fortified, the belief that a movie is a kind of drama. The analogy is obvious, once it is granted that a photograph is a true reproduction of reality, or at least so nearly true that the differences become unimportant. The conviction that the cinema is "theater" did not, however, extend effectively to the apprehension of the literate, educated classes until after the introduction of the synchronized sound track, midway through the era of theatrical exhibition. The more polite portions of the population, repelled by the vulgarity of most of the films that were shown in the "poor man's theater", and unable to accept plays without spoken words, left the movie medium to the amusement purveyors and the occasional geniuses who flourished in the time of the silent cinema. It is significant that the intelligentsia, when they discovered Chaplin, could find only a theatrical term, "pantomime", to describe his picture technique. College graduates and other properly instructed people thought that even this was mighty weak theater, as indeed it was. What brought literary minded spectators into the moviehouses in large numbers was speech, which made the cinema almost tolerable *as theater*. Words meant "drama". But what brought the words was commercial expediency. It is an ironical fact that the sound track, invented fully five years before its introduction, was added to the pictures primarily to counter the new competition of radio broadcasting, which had been demonstrating, from 1925 onward, a sensational ability to keep people home at night.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wired for sound, the mechanical "theater" regained its financial potency. The talkies were hailed as a great step forward, an extension of the stage visually, and a reinforcement of the pictures aurally. But the argument that sound is an improvement will have to rest on the premise that the function of an art medium is simple imitation, a presumption that ought not to be countenanced, yet seems to be the only practical, workable hypothesis for sound film production. Although the fallacy of similitude was discovered almost at once, in 1928, and has been thoroughly condemned by those who want an audio-visual art medium but won't take imitation, the sound film enthusiasts are still looking for evidence that their essentially wishful rationalizations can come true. The faith is still alive despite twenty-five years of failure. Skeptics can't help noticing that movies don't move any more.

The audio-visualist assumes inherent compatability of two separate mechanisms, projector and phonograph. There can be no doubt, of course, that the combination works reasonably well for making records of events, faithful to the originals within the limits of the machinery. The form of the record is imposed from without by the wave length patterns presented to the lenses (eyes) and microphones (ears). Subject to control by framing, viewpoint, lens angle, shot duration, volume, and tone, the process may be described as specialized mimicry.[1] But imitation by the mechanical mimic has no esthetic virtue, as the audio-visualist knows, since the form depends almost exclusively upon the nature of the thing imitated, upon its visible and audible shape. What is wanted is a way to reshape the shape, to impose form upon form, by deliberately stylizing the patterns of sight and the patterns of sound, and then mixing the two patterns by operating the projector and phonograph simultaneously. Here the wish is defeated, because the formalized patterns of sight and sound are qualitatively different modes of expression, two distinctly separate *media*. There is not the slightest reason for "playing" two formal patterns together when anything more than cursory attention to one of them is certain to reduce, if not entirely prevent, the spectator's perception of the other. Disney's *Fantasia* failed in practice, not for lack of trying every conceivable combination, but because of the innate disparity of the ingredients that make up any mechanized audio-visual mixture. And Eisenstein's theory of "vertical montage", a total image in which the movement of music and noise is supposed to be harmonized with the movement of pictures, fell apart because its author did not perceive that the two kinds of movement are conventionalized illusions, and are thus not necessary to each other's existence.

If the audio-visualist's dream has not come true in the highest sense, the argument continues on intermediate levels. Vernon Young insists that music and other sound effects are *unquestionably* "relevant to cinematic success", and

[1]Not full "reproduction", which implies further modifications of the total image through touch, taste, and smell.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

goes on to cite the music in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and in *The Third Man* as a very important part of "the total cinematic thrill", which would be weakened if the sound were experimentally turned off.[2] The effect would certainly be different, of course, but if we should apply to these films the rigorous esthetic standards we are accustomed to use in judging works of art in the established media, we would shortly see that the presence or absence of music is of little consequence in these loose, haphazard, and essentially shapeless films. The music emanating from the loudspeaker seems to emphasize the visual lethargy. The "thrill" is cheap.

As for noises, so rare have been the good correspondences between sight and "sound effect" images in the quarter century of sound film production, that they ought to be classed as fortuitous; and so intimately are they linked with an individual's subjective perception of the unstable sight-sound amalgam, that there seems to be no way to discern their true values. The substitution of a train whistle for a woman's scream in *The Thirty Nine Steps* must be good, because it has been imitated widely, and Madame Bonheur's laugh echoing through the garden in *Monsieur Verdoux* is a direct hit, and the treble marching song of the schoolboys in *Zero de Conduite* arouses sympathetic sentiments; yet I repeat that coincidences like these are fantastically rare. You have to sit through fifty pictures to get one minute's worth of them; moreover, there is always a danger that the erratic struggle between sight and sound may at times induce feelings of hysteria. "Wild" combinations numb the spectator's senses by startling him, as do the cockatoo's shriek in *Citizen Kane*, and the sound of the bullet's richochet at the end of *All Quiet on the Western Front*. These are cases of catharsis by fright, accidental realizations of Eisenstein's entirely reprehensible desire to overpower the spectator by physical shock.

The audio-visual mechanism works, in the moviehouse, more or less effectively, on the assumption that the show is related to the theater as an esthetic experience, with the audience, already disposed to make literal imitation its first criterion, tacitly consenting to accept the actors as real. This audience does not, by and large, consider that the process, by reducing living persons to the status of collections of photographs, actually makes its idols flatter than pancakes. The infantile dogma of naturalistic esthetics demands categorical belief that the projector and loudspeaker, "playing" in response to a strip of film, *reproduce* the things and noises that have previously been recorded through the lens and microphone. Movies are "theater" only in a very crude way, however. It is relatively easy for individuals not susceptible to mass glamour-symbols to get back their suspended disbelief and to look at films as patterns of "moving" light and shade, to perceive that there can be something more in these constructions than weak copies of vulgar dreams. Yet, on the whole,

[2]In "The Witness Point: Definitions of Film Art". *New World Writing*, Fourth Mentor Selection.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the main use of the sound film has been theatrical, increasingly so since its beginning, and entirely so whenever a producer attempts to gain cultural prestige by copying this or the other Great Play.

Meanwhile, the live stage has been virtually demolished as an esthetic force since the addition of synchronized sound to movies. This is not to deny that the history of the drama provides numerous examples of its propensity to decline and rebirth at various times and places. The stage is an erratic and volatile medium; unfortunately the invention of the cinema came at one of the periods of weakness, and the later attachment of sound to the cinema ruthlessly pushed the stage into limbo. Broadway, our version of drama, was able to reply only by imitating some of the superficial aspects of movie production; the result was the "electric theater" whose character has been noted, but not fully assessed, by Eric Bentley. The electric theater is a proliferation of elaborate lighting, pictorial sets, recorded sounds, revolving stages, and like mechanisms, whose complexities have greatly increased the importance of the director, so that the work of the non-acting personnel, the stage hands, the button pushers, and the spot lighters, may be co-ordinated with a minimum of error. The rise of the director has coincided with a serious decline of the actor's authority. The actor, surrounded and controlled by externally cued machinery, is now little more than a graceful wearer of costumes, a reciter of exactly predetermined speech. He who once could charm by improvisation, by variance from plan and script to suit the conditions of any particular performance, who could by his presence almost hypnotize the audience, has become a mesmerized marionette himself. One pseudo theater has inspired another. Live theater is puppet theater.

The effects that television transmittal will have upon the puppet plays of Broadway and the motionless movies of Hollywood can be predicted only in general terms. We can make a safe assumption that a solid ninety per cent of the stuff will be trash, for the modern culture is chromium plated, as much because of the inertia of the mass population, which has been one of the characteristics of human society in all ages, as because of the fancy technological resources that are available. The "translation" and adaptation of literary works by Old Masters (archaic dead radicals, who still require considerable softening) will continue to make up an important part of the ninety per cent, by official sentimental sanction, as prestige boosters, counterbalances to the staples of sport, crime, and belly-comedy. There is reason to hope, however, that the remaining ten per cent of television material, especially the part provided by moviemakers, will show marked improvement over the familiar Hollywood products of today. After the audience has been dispersed, and is individually seated at home with a glass of beer, the theater analogy will no longer have even the slightest validity in any serious appraisal of the nature of the cinema. The fallacious concept of audience participation will be thrown out along with the audience. The thing that is vitally necessary for stage success, *rapport*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

between actors and audience, is no more possible on television than in movie theaters. The basis of the theatrical fallacy seems to have been what might be called a faint *esprit de corps* of a group of people looking at a film in the same room at the same time, but this pitiful remnant of real drama should never have seemed significant, in view of the absolute inability of this "audience" to have influence on the screen events.

Even more important grounds for hope of cinematic improvement may be found in a seemingly trivial detail. It is that every television set is a combination of two machines, kinetoscope and radio receiver. The sight and sound images are separable by the individual spectator, who can turn off the sound or vary the tone and volume as he chooses; he now has control of the sounds that go with the pictures; and this is a power he has never before possessed in the whole history of movie exhibition. In the hands of the theater manager during the "silent" era, and delegated, as it seemed financially fit and proper, to a pianist, organist, or musical conductor, the absolute power to make the ear listen while the eye looked was passed over to the moviemakers when the synchronized sound track was introduced; and we are familiar with the results, chiefly the destruction of the visual pattern. No longer required to make expressively linked pictures in order to hold the spectator's attention (the pianist was a notoriously fanciful and unreliable sound-source), and possessed with narrators and actors who could explain in words what it takes creative imagination to present in pictures, producers and directors handed many of their chores to screenwriters, cameramen, and film editors. The screenwriters devised pseudo plays for the pseudo theater. The "directors of photography" made pretty shots when they felt like it. The editors assembled the shots into orderly, if necessarily dull, sequences. And the profits rolled in. We must not forget the credulity of the bulk audience.

But now, with startling suddenness, the consumer has his hand on, or near, the precious volume control. The revolutionary implications of the imminent threat to the sound-oriented producer's present methods are contained in this simplest and homeliest of illustrations: a large part of the words and music and noise is not going to be heard, because the baby is crying or because the baby is asleep. Sic Transit Sound Track! Willy nilly, the moviemakers will have to concentrate their efforts upon pictures again, upon visual expression, in order to have assurance that their ideas, such as they may be, will have effect. With the illusion of an "audience" shot to pieces, and the sound track greatly weakened, genuine cinema is sure to be revived.

The prospective end of the movie audience induces pleasant dreams about the possibility of new dramatic vitality in the live theater. The chances are good. People will want to get out of the house, not to see movies, which they can have any time at home, but to attend plays. Drama, which may well come back soon to formal play theaters, has never actually been dead; it has had to be found somewhere else. During the recent period of the most intense cor-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ruption of drama and cinema, with stage aping screen, and screen, stage, the apparently unconquerable human need for communication via some sort of formal rite has persisted, most conventionally in church, and most purely in professional wrestling matches. Audience participation, and identification with one side or the other in conflict, have been in evidence largely in sports events of all kinds, where a few skilled players enact a kind of serious drama before an absorbed crowd that plays its own part with great delight and naive enthusiasm. It is this social function that the theater once exercised, that the electric theater, with its slick, calculated mechanisms has thoroughly debased, and that the cinema, with all its magnificent scope and potential immortality, cannot touch. The dramatic appeal is immediate and fleeting, and must have a crowd; the cinematic appeal is to the individual, like the magic lantern image of Geneviève de Brabant to Marcel. Both these ways to emotional satisfaction are a little closer to realization every time another moviehouse is closed. We sustain no loss by the process of change, although it will take some fortitude to receive, and assess properly, a number of the horrors that are about to spring from the coming alliance of radio people and moviemakers.

Characteristically, the question of the moment, the concern that is uppermost in the minds of all, is what will be the method of payment. Coin-in-your-T.V.-slot is out, because of the difficulty and expense of collection and the practical certainty that home electronics experts would steal the pictures by wiring around the coin box. "Phonevision", brought in via your telephone wire, with the price added to your monthly Bell System bill, would work if everyone had a telephone and felt like paying directly, but the expense and complications of collection are drawbacks here, too. The most likely way will be the broadcasting of pictures under the sponsorship of commercial advertisers, the standard radio system, which will add enormously to the cost of living by tacking the price to manufactured goods, and will keep the pictures well within familiar limits of mediocrity. This third method is frightening to contemplate, but there is also a fourth, that could exist alongside it. A technical process has already been worked out, whereby pictures are "recorded" on tape, magnetically, and are "playable" on the home T.V. screen, using a mechanism similar to the ultramodern tape phonograph.

If the tape-recorded system should come into vogue, anyone could build up his own film library, and view favorite movies as often as he might wish. At this hypothetical point in its history, the cinema would at last be freed of the burden of trying to satisfy everybody at once; moreover, the beauty of any given film would be preserved in its original grandeur, not in sentimental recollection. This is the best prospect for the cinema. We have been through the worst debauchery, and are back at another beginning, this time with fifty years of experience in our heads.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FRANCIS FERGUSSON

Two Perspectives on European Literature

THESE TWO BOOKS,[1] now available in Mr. Willard R. Trask's excellent translations, have both already had distinguished careers in their original German. Auerbach's *Mimesis* was published in 1946, Curtius' *Latin Middle Ages* in 1948. Both emerge from what the Germans call *Philologie*—the study of language so defined as to include not only the chief tongues of our tradition at least, but also all the arts of letters, philosophy, history, anthropology, and "culture". A philologist in this sense must have learned Greek, Latin, and the modern languages of Europe at an early age; he must have labored for many years thereafter at his researches and general reading; and he must be blessed with the stamina to survive the attacks of his equally learned colleagues, who also lay claim to all the available knowledge. We do not have anything quite like this tradition in our country; students of literature over here are usually obliged to improvise their learning as they go along, on the basis of poor early education. Even our most intransigent "scholars"—those who pretend with the straightest face to scientific rigor and exhaustiveness—are timid and relaxed in comparison with a fully-developed *Philolog* of the good period, the period which ended with Hitler.

But both of these books are more than science and specialized learning. They are motivated, in their very different ways, by an interest in the art of literature. For that reason they have much to say to anyone seriously interested in that art: one may think of them as climbing, bloody but still breathing, from the arena of *Wissenschaft*, to address a more general audience. That is why there may be some point in my attempting to review them. The record of the professional battles which these books have survived is in learned journals all over the western world; now, I hope, they will be read (as I read them) in the spirit of the enquiring amateur.

The first thing to say about them is that they are entirely different from each other, in the materials they investigate, their methods and purposes, and in the taste and philosophy of their authors.

Professor Curtius was known until Hitler as the great German critic of modern French literature, and also as one of the first and most important contributors to Eliot's *Criterion*. Both a connoisseur and a practitioner of the arts of letters, he has translated Eliot, Gide, Valéry and Jorge Guillén, among others.

---

[1]EUROPEAN LITERATURE AND THE LATIN MIDDLE AGES, by *Ernst Robert Curtius*. Bollingen Series XXXVI. Pantheon. $5.50. MIMESIS, THE REPRESENTATION OF REALITY IN WESTERN LITERATURE, by *Erich Auerbach*. Princeton University Press. $7.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He is one of those who stood for European literature in the exciting and tragic period between the Wars, the period to which we owe so much: a time when the Goethean notion of Europe as a concert was briefly revived. Nazism and the approach of World War II put an end to that period, and to Professor Curtius' immediate concern with contemporary literature. As early as 1932, in his anti-Nazi book *Deutscher Geist in Gefahr,* he "pleaded", as he tells us in the foreword to the English edition of *The Latin Middle Ages,* "for a new Humanism, which should integrate the Middle Ages from Augustine to Dante". He continues, describing the *raison d'être* of his book: "When the German catastrophe came, I decided to serve the idea of a medievalistic Humanism by studying the Latin literature of the Middle Ages. These studies occupied me for fifteen years. The result is the present book . . . not the product of purely scholarly interests, it grew out of a concern for the preservation of Western culture. It seeks to serve an understanding of the Western cultural tradition in so far as it is manifested in literature. It attempts to illuminate the unity of that tradition in space and time by the application of new methods. In the intellectual chaos of the present it has become necessary, and happily not impossible, to demonstrate that unity. But the demonstration can only be made from a universal standpoint. Such a standpoint is afforded by Latinity. Latin was the language of the educated during the thirteen centuries which lie between Virgil and Dante." To this explanation one should add a remark from a lecture of Curtius', *The Medieval Bases of Western Thought,* also reprinted in the English edition: "The lesson of the Middle Ages is reverent reception and faithful transmission of a precious deposit. This is also the lesson which we may draw from Dante."

These explanations show how the reader should approach the six hundred closely-printed pages of the vast work; without them he might easily be lost. Professor Curtius studies the Middle Ages as the period when European literature was, in fact, one; and also for the clues they may offer us for the reception and transmission of the literary heritage. He focuses upon literature in the strictest sense—not philosophy, or religion, or theology, but the arts of language approximately as the ancient rhetoricians understood them. Professor Curtius is thus still concerned with European as distinguished from national or period literature, just as he was as a critic of modern French; but now he seeks the root, and he proposes to develop methods of investigation and analysis more like those of the medieval Latinists than like those of the modern critic. The plan is both imaginative and austere—an askesis which Curtius undergoes, and then prescribes for modern letters in general.

We have had in recent years in this country a revival of interest in traditional rhetoric. A book like Sister Miriam Joseph's study of Shakespeare's arts of language comes to mind—or, from quite a different point of view, Mr. Kenneth Burke's fertile efforts to rethink some of the concepts of ancient rhetoric for modern use. Professor Curtius' study is related to both of these

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

works, but different in its basic intention from either. Sister Miriam Joseph is concerned only with Shakespeare's use of the traditional arts of language, while Curtius, not primarily concerned with any particular author, seeks to illuminate the lore itself, when it was the common property of educated Europe. He does not, like Mr. Burke, apply his finding to modern works, but suggests in principle and in a few examples how the vernacular literatures did in fact grow out of the common Latin root.

Moreover, Professor Curtius regards literature in his strict sense as a more fundamental and indestructible bearer of the whole cultural tradition than philosophy or religion. This view of literature is cognate with his Humanism, which leaves room for both Cicero and Goethe: literature forms men's minds, and by its means the basis of civilized life is transmitted from one generation to the next. He thinks of Homer as the beginning, and Goethe as the last worthy representative, of Western culture as a unity. For that reason his study of medieval Latinity includes not only conceptions of form and mechanics from ancient rhetoric, but also recurrent topics and metaphors; governing concepts like the Goddess Natura, the Ideal Landscape, the Muses, all of which define the common *content* of literature. He gives accounts of the evolution of the notion of a classic, the formation of canons, attitudes to Heroes and Rulers, Education, the Book as Symbol, which throw light on the role of literature in the economy of medieval culture as a whole. In three theoretical chapters, on Poetry and Rhetoric, Poetry and Philosophy, and Poetry and Theology respectively, he clarifies his conception of the fundamental role of literature: it is not that he would disregard the issues of philosophy or the problem of belief, but rather that he thinks literature treats them more adequately, and especially more permanently, than the disciplines which aim to erect conceptual systems. In this belief in literature as the central embodiment of the common culture Professor Curtius reaffirms the Humanism which inspired him and many others between the Wars—the period of the Weimar Republic, the Entretiens de Pontigny, and the *Criterion*.

Most of the book is devoted to Medieval Latin Literature; not to the analysis of poems, narratives, or plays, but rather to its theoretical basis and common content, as I indicated above. But Professor Curtius always has the vernacular literatures up to the eighteenth century in mind, and from time to time he refers to them, giving brief examples of their growth out of the Latin root. After the main argument, there are twenty-five Excursuses on various topics which enrich the general picture; and there one finds three short essays on Spanish literature, including "Calderon's Theory of Art and the *Artes Liberales*". In these essays he makes it very clear how he conceives the relation between modern European literature and Latinity.

Dante is of course the author who best exemplifies the Medieval heritage, the process whereby it was acquired, and its transmission to the vernacular literatures. Professor Curtius mentions Dante in the first chapter, and seems to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have him in mind throughout; but he has comparatively little to say about him directly, especially when one reflects how much there would be to say about him. What he does say about Dante is pretty closely confined to Dante's Latinity, in accord with the theme of the book as a whole. He demonstrates that the *Divine Comedy* would not have been possible without that culture. He shows, for example, that the basic scheme of alternating Pagan and Christian *exempla* in the *Purgatorio*, though completely digested and reformed by Dante for his own purposes, was one of the common resources which he inherited. He shows that Dante's Letter to Can Grande, that crucial and (until recently) neglected work in which Dante explains his own methods and principles of composition, can only be understood in the light of the Latinity of the time. He shows that Dante's conception of poetry, especially in his claim of cognitive value for it, was quite unlike that of Aquinas: he sees Dante as poet in contradistinction to the philosopher or theologian. In these respects Dante embodies a tradition older than the Scholasticism of his time, and lasting beyond it. Thus Dante is the prime instance of literature undercutting, as it were, any and all abstract systems. In all of this there is light on Dante—one indispensable perspective, at least, upon that great figure.

Yet the question remains, about Dante and I suppose about Medieval Latinity in general, how adequate the cult of Humane Letters is for complete understanding. Professor Curtius of course knows and says that Dante and his period were Christian, but he does not investigate the formative effects of Christian doctrine and belief upon men's minds and arts. We know that Dante's conception of poetry, though not Scholastic, was Christian, and that many of his techniques and formal principles were derived from Scripture and the Hebraic-Christian lore of its interpretation: he tells us so himself, in the same Letter to Can Grande in which he lists the *modi* derived from Latinity. Specialists in various fields—notably Arabic culture—have objected to some aspects of the book on the ground that *their* perspective on the period was left out: the kind of scholarly problems inevitable in a work of this vast scope. Behind it all lurk the insoluble puzzles of history: what does it take to revive Humane Letters? Is a love and understanding of Humane Letters themselves enough, or would it require a faith beyond them to make them sprout once more, like the withered tree in Dante's Paradiso Terrestre, which puts forth spring foliage when Christ's car touches it? To answer the fundamental questions raised by this book would require vast erudition, plus a prophetic insight which would be even harder to come by.

Lentement les temps se divident: our children's children may see what the fate of Humane Letters is to be. Meanwhile we have in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* a vast store of significant learning, and many new and important insights into the Humane literary heritage and its precarious transmission.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

II

Professor Auerbach, now at Yale, has been in this country since the end of the War, and some of his work has been published in this and other literary magazines, and in learned journals here. He has published an important work on Dante in German, *Dante als Dichter der Irdischen Welt*, many articles on Romance languages and literatures, and *Figura*, a study of the development of Dante's allegory. *Mimesis*, written in Istanbul during the War, is his most extensive work, and the best one in which to study his original and illuminating methods of literary analysis.

Professor Auerbach studies the representation of reality in twenty chapters, each based on one or more short passages from works of literature, beginning with the *Odyssey* and ending with *To The Lighthouse*. On the way he considers Petronius, two late Latin narratives, three Medieval texts, the Farinata-Cavalcante episode from the *Inferno*, bits of Rabelais, Shakespeare and Cervantes; samples of French neoclassic literature, and of Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, the Goncourts, and Zola. This slight indication of the contents of the book will show how vast its scope is, and how impossible it would be, even for one with the requisite erudition, to estimate its success in detail. Professor Auerbach's methods make things easy for the reader who lacks much knowledge of Latin style in the dark ages, for example: each passage analyzed is short, and the elucidations are very effective. Every chapter is good reading, both because of the light shed on the particular text, and because of the fascination of Professor Auerbach's methods, ostensibly philological *explication de texte*, actually the analysis, in the small example, of the author's basic attitudes to "reality", and of his strategies for representing it. But I will not attempt to discuss it in detail, but rather to enquire what Professor Auerbach means by the theme of the book as a whole, which is suggested in the title.

Five of the chapters seem to me especially important for understanding Professor Auerbach's theme. The reader inevitably wants to know how "reality" and "representation" are understood. Professor Auerbach does not define either term, for his method is to concentrate upon the analyses of particular texts, and to rely upon the reader to derive his understanding of the general ideas from common sense and from the material itself. Thus his concept "reality" is based upon Dante's Aristotelian-Christian realism, and also modern realism as exemplified in the French novel of the Nineteenth Century. His notion of representation rests upon the distinction between the classic notion of three separate styles, the elevated, middle, and low, and realistic styles (both Medieval and modern) in which the sublime, the everyday, and the low, or grotesque, or comic, or disgusting, are mixed. The five chapters in which these ideas are clearest, are 1, *Odysseus' Scar;* 8, *Farinata and Cavalcante;* 15, *The Faux Dévot;* 18, *In the Hotel de la Mole*, and 19, *Germinie Lacerteux.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The first chapter begins with an analysis of the episode in the *Odyssey* in which Odysseus' old nurse, Eurycleia, giving him a bath, recognizes him by a scar on his thigh. What Professor Auerbach has to say about the way reality is represented in this episode: its bright, uniform illumination; its rigidly-held present tense—for the interpolation which recounts Odysseus' wounding by the boar, years ago, is as present as the bath—the sensuous immediacy of everything; the serenity of the narrative movement—is very just and illuminating. But the point of the chapter is clear only when the Homeric episode is compared with the Abraham-Isaac story in the Old Testament. In reading Homer, "It does not matter whether we know that all this is only legend, 'make-believe'. The oft-repeated reproach that Homer is a liar takes nothing from his effectiveness, he does not need to base his story on historical reality." The Old Testament narrative, on the contrary, is rooted in time and history; in Abraham's past, and in the past of his tribe. It is far darker and more mysterious than Homer; all is directed toward the partly-hidden will of God; but it offers itself as literally true. Because of this basic attitude to its reality, the tiniest episode, however humble or grotesque, may be as "problematic" (one of the author's favorite words), as significant and intense, as the sublimest tragedy. Because it is true, mysterious, and related at every point to the will of God, it requires, and has of course received, endless interpretation. Homer, on the other hand, being immediately clear, completely expressed, neither requires nor admits interpretation. The Old Testament story represents reality much more than Homer does; Homer, though he wrote before the classic doctrine of the separation of styles, stands for that classic conception of art which Professor Auerbach uses throughout to contrast with the various kinds of realism.

The full scope of Professor Auerbach's conception of the Hebraic-Christian realism does not emerge until he comes to Dante. Chapter 8, on the Farinata-Cavalcante episode in the *Inferno*, is offered as an example of Dante's realism, or, as it may be described, his *mixture* of styles. The point is that Dante can compass both common speech and the humblest subjects, classically associated with comedy, and at the same time the most "sublime" emotions and rhetorical effects, classically associated with tragedy and epic. Dante's realism, like that of the Old Testament, is religious: it is the eye of God upon every detail of human life which guarantees its timeless value and meaning, yet at the same time firmly anchors it in time and place. Religious realism in this tradition deals with human individual fates of all kinds. The classic notion of three styles, on the other hand, tends to be general, typical, moralistic, or "esthetic". It is usually associated with a rigid class structure, and the low style for servants, the high style for princes, is supposed to reflect some natural and permanent stratification in human society. The *Divine Comedy* and the Old Testament narratives, on the other hand, envisage a "reality" much more funda-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mental than any social order, any abstract moral system, or any absolute conception of style.

Professor Auerbach's conception of this religious realism, starting in the Old Testament and culminating in Dante, contains, I think, his most original and illuminating insights. It would not be possible to do justice to it in a review; I'm not even sure that *Mimesis* makes it sufficiently clear. The early book on Dante, the monograph, *Figura,* in which the development of Dante's realism from its ancient sources is traced, and a number of shorter studies of Dante's methods which have appeared in various journals, would perhaps be required for full understanding of Professor Auerbach's views. I hope that this material will soon be collected and made available in English, for I think it is of first importance in our present literary studies.

I have more reservations about the application of these concepts to more modern literature in the remainder of the book. Chapter 15, *The Faux Dévot* (one of La Bruyère's *Caractères*) is in effect a brief study of French neoclassicism in relation to Professor Auerbach's theme. In general, he sees the age of Louis XIV as governed by the classic "separation of styles" with all that goes with it—the sense of reality, as one might put it, strained through social, moral, and esthetic conventions. It is this chapter, therefore, where one may best study the classic or neoclassic conception of literary representation which Professor Auerbach opposes to realism. The reservations I have are due less to the author's native understanding of this literature than to the focus of the book as a whole, which is not well designed to bring out what Racine and Molière, for example, do offer. Professor Auerbach, following his line of enquiry, does not seek to expound what *they* achieved, so much as to estimate their "realism". Even from this point of view one might have questions: is there no "reality" in Molière's rational norms, conventional though they are, or in Racine's moral paradoxes, abstract though *they* are?—It depends, of course, upon what one means by reality.

In chapters 18 and 19 Professor Auerbach discusses Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, the Goncourts and Zola; and these chapters, taken together, show what is meant by modern realism. Modern realism is quite different from Dante's, yet Professor Auerbach accepts it as "real" also, and perhaps even more real. He defines it as follows: "The serious treatment of everyday reality, the rise of more extensive and socially inferior human groups to the position of subject matter for problematic-existential representation, on the one hand; on the other, the embedding of random persons and events in the general course of contemporary history, the fluid historical background—these, we believe, are the foundations of modern realism" (page 491). I do not quarrel with this definition, nor with the fine analyses of passages from particular works. If these chapters do not quite satisfy me, that is perhaps because we have so much modern realism which fulfills the definition, yet strikes me as insignificant and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not very "real". Are the differentia of this school or style as significant as Professor Auerbach seems to maintain? Do we not usually, and rightly, think that the best modern realists are those who reveal most about human nature and destiny *beyond* the temporal facts, and who construct the most rich and satisfying poetic forms?

Such questions as these are perhaps inappropriate, because of the focus and method of the whole of *Mimesis*. But raising them may help us to understand the point of view which gives the book its great scope, its kind of objectivity, and its deep, if hidden consistency. There is, for example, the view of history and its importance which is implied in Professor Auerbach's definition of modern realism. In Dante's realism history has its crucial place, but so do moral truth and God, the ultimate object of faith and hope; both of them are outside the temporal sequence itself, though in perpetual relation to it. If God is not in the picture at all, and the "truths" of the moral life vary with the shifts of time and place and circumstance, then "history" is the ultimate reality. The modern realists' concern with "the general course of contemporary history, the fluid historical background", would make their realism realer than Dante's—for his view of the shifting scenes of history is formed by his belief in the timeless realities of God and moral truth. For the purposes of *Mimesis* as a whole, Professor Auerbach has accepted, I think, the view that history is the realest or final reality. This does not prevent him from appreciating Dante to the full—on the contrary; but it makes it unnecessary, and even irrelevant, to compare Dante's realism with Flaubert's: the relation is historic. There is, as I suggested, a *kind* of objectivity in this view; Professor Auerbach speaks at one point of the "incomparable historical vantage point which [this age] affords". But questions of permanent value, whether moral, artistic, or religious, are ruled out.

Questions of artistic value are ruled out too. I must hasten to say that this does not mean that Professor Auerbach fails to see artistic values; his poetic sensibility is evident again and again, it is one of the things that give *Mimesis* its great value. But he is investigating the representation of reality and not poetry as such. For that reason he never raises the questions which chiefly concern modern American criticism: the unity and coherence of the poem or play as a whole, the integrity and inner order of the art-work. That is one reason why his method of analyzing short passages from longer works is so effective for his purposes: he wants to know, not what the author made, but how he represents a reality outside the poem altogether. It is amazing how much this method reveals incidentally about poetry and poems. But from time to time it leads Professor Auerbach to judgments which I question, for example, that Dante's characters are so real that the coherence of the Canto or Cántica is lost: I should prefer to say that the larger units of the composition are there to be seen, if one is looking for them. His treatment of Shakespeare,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

based on the analysis of a short scene between Prince Hal and Poins, though it illustrates his theme well and most interestingly, is hardly adequate for Shakespeare. His unit is the play; I do not think one can assess his success in representing reality on the basis of a shorter selection.

The great value of *Mimesis* for us lies in its unfashionable focus: it is time we raised once more the ancient question of art's truth to reality. On the basis of a common sense and historistic conception of reality, Professor Auerbach has written a work of extraordinary learning, perceptiveness, and rigor. I think its methods, its ideas, and its particular insights should keep us busy for a long time.

DOUGLAS PARKER

The Rescue of Aeschylus

AESCHYLUS: ORESTEIA, translated and with an introduction by *Richmond Lattimore*. Chicago. $2.50.

SWINBURNE'S BEEN A LONG TIME DYING. The mild little man pottered his last potter under the proud eye of Watts-Dunton in 1909, but his passing seems to have gone unnoticed till recently. Certainly the reader of English translations of Greek tragedy could not have told the old man was dead. Blood he had in him, so much blood, and every other corpuscle of it anapestic:

Gather ye home; are ye great, do ye crave adoration,
O childless Children of Night in the pride of your going?
(Give good words, O Folk of the Fold!)
Aeonian caverns of glory are yours, and oblation
Of worship, and sacrifice high, and praise overflowing.
(Give good words, O young men and old!)

This is Murray on the last chorus of the *Eumenides*, translating sixteen years after Swinburne's death, and preserving intact all the virtues of "Nepheleida"—tinkling rhythm, confining rhyme, general fuzziness of statement. All that is lacking is the banjo accompaniment by Euripides: *Tophlattothrattophlattothrat.*

But Murray, it will be said, was disposed of by Eliot more than thirty years ago, in the essay "Euripides and Professor Murray". The point is well taken, but Murray, the last of the pre-Raphaelites, is still corporeal, and his variations on Greek tragedy in the style of the *Atalanta* live on.

It might be better to say they are enshrined. Let the Greekless student of drama, or poetry, or both turn to what has become the authorized version, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Oates-O'Neill *Complete Greek Drama,* and what will he find? Murray, or, what is infinitely worse, A. S. Way. The only translator in the compendium that does not proceed under the Swinburnian definition of poetry as beautiful, and often meaningless, noise is Jebb, whose translations of Sophocles have the advantage of being prose, sonorous, soporific prose.

It is easy to see, in retrospect, how Swinburne became the succubus of translators, since translators, by their very nature, are a conservative breed. They hate old wine in new bottles. They look for ready-made vessels to contain their Falernian. And if the vessel is porous, and the wine has to be watered down to stave off the inevitable evaporation, the job is easier. Swinburne's grandiose plays had choruses, they used other meters than the iambo-trochaic. They were in short, perfect vessels. And thus the dilution began.

That it took forty-four years to stop this process is no credit to Hellenists or poets. But stopped it is, and Professor Lattimore may take most of the credit. His translation of the *Oresteia* is the first volume of *The Complete Greek Tragedies* published by Chicago, and, if subsequent volumes are only one-half as good as this, Swinburne's ghost is laid, and the present generation need never again perceive Greek tragedy through a miasma of well-intentioned padding.

The excellence of this translation should come as no surprise to those who have already read Lattimore's translation of the first play of the trilogy, the *Agamemnon,* in Dudley Fitts' *Greek Plays in Modern Translation*—a curiously uneven selection which also presents such flaccid performances as Prokosch's *Medea* and Edith Hamilton's *Prometheus.* This *Agamemnon* has already acquired a reputation as the ideal of the translator: an English Aeschylus, a rendering almost wholly faithful to the Greek, and also a distinguished piece of English poetry. It is my happy conclusion that the same impossibly high standard is preserved in the other two plays of the trilogy, the *Choephori* (or *Libation-Bearers*) and the *Eumenides.* Here, for example, is Lattimore's rendering of the few lines quoted in Murray's translation above:

> *Home, home, of high, or aspiring*
> *Daughters of Night, aged children, in blithe processional.*
> *Bless them all here, with silence.*
> *In the primeval dark of earth-hollows*
> *held in high veneration with rights sacrificial*
> *bless them, all people, with silence.*

Notice how the anapestic swing of the Greek is present, yet does not obtrude or jingle, but by a judicious use of quantity, e.g., "aged children", is made acceptable and more than acceptable to the modern ear. Added to this, it makes sense, and correct sense, whereas Murray's version seems almost proof against any interpretation whatsoever.

The old translators sought a vessel. Lattimore seems to have created his own, with, possibly, an assist from Robert Bridges. His rendering of the iambic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sections of the plays are made into a six-stress line that appears to derive from *The Testament of Beauty* but is much more flexible. Here is Bridges:

Conscient Reason, the channel of man's spiritual joy,
hath such dominant function also in bodily feeling
that 'tis the measure of suffering in all animals,
in lower forms, negligible, and in the lowest
pain can be felt no more than mid the dancing waves
a pleasure-boat feeleth the hand on her tiller
that keepeth-up her head to th' wind and her sails full.

Lattimore drops the archaisms, depends more on accent than Bridges, and, in an equally low-keyed passage, produces this:

Dear friends, in this deliberation stay with me.
We hold a common hatred in this house. Do not
for fear of any, hide your thought inside your heart.
The day of destiny waits for the free man as well
as for the man enslaved beneath an alien hand.
If you know any better course than mine, tell me.

It is interesting to note that it is *not* the meter he employs in his *Iliad*, though that is also translated in a six-beat line. The meter here (*Libation-Bearers*, 101-105) suggests, without ever falling into, an iambic movement, and contains fewer unstressed syllables than the meter of, say,

Now to the Trojans came as messenger wind-footed Iris,
in her speed, with the dark message from Zeus of the aegis.
These were holding assembly in front of the doors of Priam
gathered together in one place, the elders and the young men.
Standing close at hand swift-running Iris spoke to them. . . .

(*Iliad*, 2.786-790), where the dactylic hexameter is suggested but avoided.

All in all, this is a staggering achievement. Not only does Lattimore translate faithfully, but faithfully line for line, and his command of Greek and English is so great that he can reproduce completely, and make sense of, a line (*Agamemnon*, 7) which has been ejected on account of its difficulty by editors down to Fraenkel:

. . . . these stars, upon their wane and when the rest arise.

Here a direct analogy has been found for the syntactical difficulties in the Greek

asteras, hōtan phthinosin, antolas te tōn.

And yet it is shown that, though difficult, the line is not insoluble.

But single lines will not suffice to show the real accomplishment here. The pacing, the heightening of style, the shifts in mood necessary to the pulsing of this tale of revenge, counter-revenge, and ultimate equilibrium are all handled admirably. An example of this in small compass is the speech of Cassandra in the *Agamemnon* (lines 1178-1197) in which the half-mad Trojan priestess

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rouses herself to a mantic fury and reveals the underlying cause of the tragedy, the curse on the house of Atreus, and prophesies its outcome:

No longer shall my prophecies like some young girl
new-married glance from under veils, but bright and strong
as winds blow into morning and the sun's uprise
shall wax along the swell like some great wave, to burst
at last upon the shining of this agony.
Now I will tell you plainly and from no cryptic speech;
bear me then witness, running at my heels upon
the scent of these old brutal things done long ago.
There is a choir that sings as one, that shall not again
leave this house ever; the song thereof breaks harsh with menace.
And drugged to double fury on the wine of men's
blood shed, there lurks forever here a drunken rout
of ingrown vengeful spirits never to be cast forth.
Hanging above the hall they chant their song of hate
and the old sin; and taking up the strain in turn
spit curses on that man who spoiled his brother's bed.
Did I go wide, or hit, like a real archer? Am I
some swindling seer who hawks his lies from door to door?
Upon your oath, bear witness that I know by heart
the legend of ancient wickedness within this house.

Here is no dilution, no palliation of Aeschylus' "violent catachreses"; only faithful translation—and poetry.

Prefaced to the three plays is the most admirable essay to be found anywhere on the interpretation of the trilogy as a whole. Special attention is paid to the imagery, which previous translators, and even editors, have regarded as top-dressing, to be varied at will. Any classical scholar who disdains the reading of translations (are there any left?) should still procure the book for this one essay, which makes Meautis and even Kitto toil far, far behind. For the Greek-less reader, there is no other translation to be considered, for Lattimore has done in verse what people despair of doing in prose.

By this achievement, Aeschylus (and, it is to be hoped, Sophocles and Euripides) have been rescued not only from the Swinburnian obscurantists, but from the new school of translation, which specializes in ramming the classics into undistinguished prose so that he who rides the bus may read, or, failing that, at least succeeds in putting them into such flat poetry that no anti-poetic nature would be offended by it. This new school, best known as the Penguin or "jes' folks" school, while activated by a presumably sincere desire to ensure a wider circulation for the classics, is in such ill-considered reaction against the Murrayites that it regards pap as the only alternative to watered wine: to this end it has already ironed out Homer into undergraduate jargon and pre-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sented Lucretius as a sort of early Lancelot Hogben, while Sophocles and Euripides are peeping from behind its colophon in prosy iambics. I doubt that anyone will try Aeschylus in this intimately low-brow manner after reading Lattimore.

Mr. Lattimore is that rarest of all literary men, a fine poet and a thorough scholar. It is to be hoped that his colleagues will prove the same, and that *The Complete Greek Tragedies* will continue on the same level, rescuing the greatest products of Athens from Pre-Raphaelite oblivion and pocket-size mongrelization.

And is it too much to hope that somebody, somehow, will do the same for the comedies of Aristophanes, whose nearest English equivalents now are the charming but hopelessly out-dated Gilbertian paraphrases of B. B. Rogers?

PATRICK F. QUINN

The Puritan Experiment

THE NEW ENGLAND MIND: FROM COLONY TO PROVINCE, by *Perry Miller*. Harvard University Press. $6.50.

To condense the praise: this book is a major achievement, and only Perry Miller could have written it. At the same time, it strikes me as different from his other volumes in that it has no important new proposals to make about its subject. As an intellectual history of the first century of American Puritanism the book is authoritative and it may be definitive. It is not especially original, but why should it be? So great is Mr. Miller's reputation as an expert on early New England thought that we tend to expect too much from him, taking it for granted that every time he writes about the Puritans he will have something distinctively new to say. This is unrealistic. His whole work, his *oeuvre*, on Puritanism, is original enough; the present volume, as one section of that work, may legitimately accent other virtues. So we should first see this book in relation to the others Mr. Miller has written, and in doing so take note of the rationale that has apparently guided him since he began his studies of Puritanism over twenty years ago.

In *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts* (1933) he presented his basic thesis: that the religion brought to America by the settlers of 1629 was Non-separating Congregationalism, a particular form of Puritanism chiefly designed by the theologian William Ames and characterized by its emphasis on a theory of sacred "covenants". If this is understood, many details of the religious and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intellectual history of seventeenth century Massachusetts begin to make sense. But no single formula will solve the Puritan enigma, and even Mr. Miller's formula, pertinent as it was, had to be set in a context of wider considerations. Hence his next major work, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (1939).[1] In this book he reconstructed the vast intellectual sky of the Puritans, charted the abstract constellations of their theology, psychology, rhetoric and so on, ticked off the minor meteors, and paused occasionally to weigh a star of the magnitude of Peter Ramus. To put it mildly, both these books—the one very narrow in scope, the other very large—broke new ground. And when Mr. Miller wrote about Jonathan Edwards a few years ago, and about Roger Williams just recently, he broke new ground again in two different areas. Despite their difference in weight these two books complement each other. They are studies of two individual Puritans who deviated from the New England Way, two heretics who rejected the prevalent orthodoxy, Williams early and Edwards late. Now, having explored these four different salients, Mr. Miller has returned to the central terrain which his previous books have helped define. His intention this time is not to construct an original interpretation of early New England thought but to build on the foundations he first began to set in place twenty years ago. *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* is thus the fifth volume in a unified study of American Puritanism.

It also stands as a self-sufficient unity, presuming no highly specialized knowledge on the part of its readers, and assuming only that they will be interested in an analysis of religious and intellectual developments in New England between 1630 and 1730. It happens that the general perspective which results from Mr. Miller's analysis may be stated in quite simple terms. The Puritan age was an age of transition, as all ages presumably are. The developments that he records are the classic ones of decline and fall, of hopes that faded and compromises that grew increasingly desperate as the original premise proved more and more unsound. For the Puritan settlers had a very special notion of who they were and what they were doing. They did not see themselves as merely one among many dissenting sects, eager to be idiosyncratic, and unmolested, in their own peculiar way. Instead, their thesis was that they uniquely were God's chosen people and that God's truth had been given solely into their jealous charge. On the New England coast they hoped to prove this thesis, not, of course, to themselves, who knew it as an axiom, but to the world. Europe would learn on whose side history and Providence were allied, and the Church of England would recognize at last that her true site was Boston rather than London. The experiment failed. When now, under Mr. Miller's guidance, we take notes on what happened, we can only conclude that the premise was false, the apparatus rusty, the experimenters inept. What the Puritans managed to demonstrate was the reverse of the proposition they had

[1]Recently reissued by Harvard University Press.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

set out to prove. And they did this all the more effectively precisely because they had so opposite an end in view.

Thematically, this is at least part of what the book is about. Substantially, it is not so easily reducible to simple terms. Although Mr. Miller writes perhaps as lucidly as the gnarled nature of his material will let him, he is, quite properly, determined to be thorough. "My account," he says, "is not popular, and I strive to make it not superficial." He need have no fears on that score. This is a large book, closely printed, closely argued, crammed with detail. But the patience with which it must be read is as nothing to the heroic degree of the same virtue that went into its preparation and writing. Some of the great crises for the New England conscience involved questions of such airy thinness that only a student with the *expertise* of Mr. Miller can even begin to suspect that a debate was in progress. When the very cornerstone of Puritan faith—the covenant theory—was crumbling, there was hardly any overt indication that anything was wrong. And so Mr. Miller has had to match the Puritans at their own game, multiplying distinctions, shading each meticulous qualification, looking beyond primary to secondary and even tertiary causes. It is a tortuous excursion that he takes us on, and yet in spite of the thick growth of detail we rarely lose a sense of direction. For the book is skillfully organized by means of two key words, "covenant" and "jeremiad", and two ubiquitous figures, Increase and Cotton Mather.

The Puritan leaders of the first generation supposed that the great importance of their undertaking was owing to the existence of an agreement between their social-religious group and God. By virtue of this national covenant the new Zion they were erecting in New England would enjoy a special destiny. But when, exactly? For sin remained a reality, epidemics were common, along the frontiers the Indian wars went on. These harsh facts were construed as visitations of divine displeasure; in response, days of fasting and public humiliation were appointed. Out of the fast-day sermon there developed a new literary form, the jeremiad. A review of afflictions present and to come, the jeremiad is described by Mr. Miller as a kind of psychological gesture, a ritualistic means of admitting that things were going wrong. The Mathers made incessant use of it as a verbal cudgel with which to force successive generations of Puritans into adherence with the covenant-principle of the founders. One of Mr. Miller's most interesting findings is that both the *Brief History* (1676) of Increase Mather and the famous *Magnalia* (1702) of his son are not histories, as we know the term and as William Bradford of Plymouth knew it, but jeremiads. Similarly, the Salem witchcraft frenzy began and ended with the interaction of the same four factors: covenant, jeremiad, and the two Mathers. Lest the jeremiad become too tediously repetitious, Cotton Mather was constantly on the lookout for fresh material. He eventually discovered his most effective emotional dynamite in the horror of witchcraft. Its special heinousness

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was its blasphemy of the covenant concept, for witchcraft, like spiritual regeneration, was founded on a compact, but one with hell. When the grisly affair was over, thanks to Increase Mather's *Cases of Conscience,* his son improved the occasion by publishing a new jeremiad, *Wonders of the Invisible World.* But no effort to spiritualize the business could remedy the immense hidden damage that resulted from the Salem trials. A society assumed to be in covenant with God had committed irreparable evil. How, then, was it possible to give total assent to the assumption?

The Salem affair was only one of the episodes which helped shatter New England's faith in the God-centered principle the colony had been established to proclaim. There were many others: the quarrel over the baptizing of children of the Elect, the religious empire-building of Solomon Stoddard in the Connecticut valley, the ironic mix-up during the smallpox epidemic of 1721 (when the clergy took the side of science and the laity demanded the old-fashioned therapy of fast-days), the struggle for control of Harvard College. On each occasion the New England mind was forced to reconsider its basic contention. Eventually it was reconsidered out of existence. Cotton Mather spent most of his indefatigable life in ingenious efforts to shore it up. But in his own crablike way he "backed into modernity", and by sponsoring Newtonian science he became one of those who helped preside at the birth of the man-centered age of reason. His *Ratio* (1726) was, according to Mr. Miller, the most honest book Mather ever wrote, for it in effect conceded that the Puritans were not, after all, a people divinely set apart and covenanted with God as a teleological object-lesson for the rest of humanity. It was an admission at long last that an end had come to the Puritan experiment.

What was its meaning? If this question were not raised by Mr. Miller in the preface to his book it would be ungenerous to raise it now. Certainly no historian need do more than he has done: a detailed account is made of the mind of American Puritanism in its relationship to the environmental actualities in which it unsuccessfully sought to thrive. But this accomplishment, impressive as it is, is not quite enough for Mr. Miller. He has a more ambitious objective:

> Frankly, did I regard this investigation as no more than an account of intellectual activity in colonial New England I would long since have given it over as not worth the effort. But the fascination of this region, for the first two hundred or more years of its existnce, is that it affords the historian an ideal laboratory . . . for extracting certain generalizations about the relation of thought or ideas to communal experience. I believe profoundly that the story herein recounted is chiefly valuable for its *representative* quality: it is a case history of the accommodation to the American landscape of an imported and highly articulated system of ideas. . . . What I should most like to claim for this study is that it amounts to a sort of working model for American history.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There is nothing of the fussy curator about Mr. Miller's work as an historian of ideas, yet in this statement of his purpose or hope he exceeds himself and imputes to the book a dimension of meaning and interest it does not visibly have.

If generalizations are to be made about the relation of ideas to communal experience there should be some parity between the two terms. Mr. Miller's emphasis is markedly one-sided, on the ideas. His concern is with the official mind of New England, *mind* meaning "what was said and done publicly", the mind that spoke for the record. Communal experience, on the other hand, is a relatively mute affair. To trace its contours the historian must rely less on public statement than on anecdote and social fact. Vague phrases these, but as an instance: Puritan congregations assembled in their meeting houses twice a week to hear sermons that lasted at least two hours, usually three. The highly abstract mind that created this vast sermon literature is the mind that interests Mr. Miller. He has little to say about the mind of the audiences that listened to, or merely endured, the sermons. Far more communal experience is represented by the pews than by the pulpits, but since Mr. Miller is primarily an intellectual historian he gives most of his attention to the clergy, their quarrels, and their articulate opponents. This emphasis does not make possible any important generalizations. What can one say except, by way of platitude, that the exigencies of actual life always tend to modify the assertions of theory?

Mr. Miller attempts very little generalizing himself, seems content to leave this task to the reader, but he does offer some guidance. He suggests that the book be read not alone for its intrinsic interest but as a "working model for American history". It is odd that he recommends *this* orientation, for in reading the book one finds oneself looking backward in time, not ahead. The Puritan experiment seems much more meaningful as a coda to European than as a prologue to American history.

"The orthodox colonies were originally medieval states." This remark is made incidentally, but nothing else Mr. Miller says does more to clarify the significance of the story he tells. In the relative isolation of New England the Puritans tried to establish a way of life that had not flourished for several hundred years. Their Zion was to be a society dominated by religious ideas, an integrated society, characterized by piety and unity. The ideal of piety had a somewhat longer life than the ideal of unity, but neither worked. Hardly had the colony been set up when dissension set in. Although the rebels Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams were promptly expelled, new difficulties arose and increased. The cause was lost from the outset. For the Puritans were trying to avoid the great new idea of the seventeenth century, the idea of a secular state, and it was simply unavoidable. It did no good to turn back the calendar by about four centuries. This only caused New England, during its first hundred years, to re-enact in condensed form what Europe had gone

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through in its slow transition from the middle ages to the renaissance. In New England as in Europe, only much faster, an other-worldly orientation was supplanted by secular interests and an increasing concern with the here-and-now. In its accelerated duplication of European experience, Massachusetts even had its own small-scale version of the reformation. For if, in Dawson's words, "Luther's religious work of reformation and simplification amounted to a de-intellectualization of the Catholic tradition", then Luther's work was done by Cotton Mather in New England. He who had been a bulwark of Puritan scholasticism found it necessary to de-intellectualize this heritage and guide his people into a religion of pietism. To fetch it a bit farther: the work of Jonathan Edwards was an attempt at counter-reformation; and in another New Englander, Franklin, were realized many of the ideals of sixteenth century European humanism.

So: the irreversibility of history, the impossibility of thwarting an idea whose time has come, the insolvency in the post-medieval world of the ideal of a monistic, sacral state—these are the three great negatives which the Puritan experiment proved. Europe had made proof of them already, but not in so narrow and efficient a laboratory. The Puritans clinched the case. It is not the American future which this book sets in perspective but the European past.

MARK SCHORER

A Book of Yes and No

THE ADVENTURES OF AUGIE MARCH, by *Saul Bellow*. The Viking Press. $4.50.

IN THE DANGLING MAN, Saul Bellow's first novel, we come across this passage:

> He has a community. I have this six-sided box. And goodness is achieved not in a vacuum, but in the company of other men, attended by love. I, in this room, separate, alienated, distrustful, find in my purpose not an open world, but a closed, hopeless jail. My perspectives end in the walls. Nothing of the future comes to me. Only the past, in its shabbiness and innocence. . . . One room holds me.

If one were to invert every term in this passage ("I have the world . . . I, related, trustful . . . My perspectives run backward, forward, unending . . . Finally, I have the future, its promise. . . . The world can hardly hold me") one would have a roughly adequate text for his third novel, *The Adventures of Augie March*. Between these two stands *The Victim*, that intensive study of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the moral complexities of human relatedness. *Alienation, relation, assimilation:* the thematic progression is something like that. And *regressive, intensive, expansive* are words that will define the psychological no less than the stylistic and structural correlatives.

The contrast at the extremes is instructive. *The Dangling Man* is the record of a man's moral deterioration as he hangs suspended for many months between the normal world of friendship, work, marriage, and choices, and the army world of mechanization and imposed routine; as his deterioration advances, his friends abandon him, his marriage decays, perspectives shorten, alternatives disappear; when it is complete, he escapes from freedom at last, dives into induction with the shout, "Hurray for regular hours! And for the supervision of the spirit! Long live regimentation!"

The Adventures of Augie March opens as follows:

> I am an American, Chicago born—Chicago, that somber city—and go at things as I have taught myself, free-style, and will make the record in my own way: first to knock, first admitted; sometimes an innocent knock, sometimes a not so innocent. But a man's character is his fate, says Heraclitus, and in the end there isn't any way to disguise the nature of the knocks by acoustical work on the door or gloving the knuckles.

Twenty-odd years later and several hundred pages it ends like this:

> . . . I got to grinning again. That's the *animal ridens* in me, the laughing creature, forever rising up. . . . Or is the laugh at nature—including eternity—that it thinks it can win over us and the power of hope? Nah, nah! I think. It never will. But that probably is the joke, on one or the other, and laughing is an enigma that includes both. Look at me, going everywhere! Why, I am a sort of Columbus of those near-at-hand and believe you can come to them in this immediate *terra incognita* that spreads out in every gaze. I may well be a flop at this line of endeavor. Columbus too thought he was a flop, probably, when they sent him back in chains. Which didn't prove there was no America.

What we find between this opening and this closing statement looks like a number of things that it is not. It looks, first, like a modern American picaresque novel, which in any strict sense it is not at all. The early novels of Frederick Prokosch, with all their perfumed exoticism, were much more nearly of the type than *Augie March.* Developing as it did at the point where the institutional sanctions of feudalism were dissolving, the picaresque novel was episodic in the complete sense, without structural pattern or progression, and its hero was a minor sort of villain, a genuinely rootless, classless, a-moral adventurer. *Augie March* appears to be loosely episodic, but its episodes are contained within a thematic, hence a structural pattern; the pattern includes a constant return to characters previously encountered, to places already known, which in itself suggests that Augie is not rootless; no more is he classless; no more is he a-moral, for while he is indeed an adventurer, his adventure is the quest of an acceptable "fate", which is to say, of his own character.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Or it looks like an example of the *Bildungsroman,* an American *Tono Bungay.* "I want to tell—*myself,*" says the hero of that novel—

> I want to tell—*myself,* and my impressions of the thing as a whole, to say things I have come to feel intensely of the laws, traditions, usages, and ideas we call society, and how we poor individuals get driven and lured and stranded among these windy, perplexing shoals and channels.

The life of society over a certain period, and the development no less than the education of the hero as he grows up in that larger life, experiencing and inspecting it. *Tono Bungay* devotes itself to a fairly systematic analysis of the organization of British society at the turn into the present century and displays a *breadth* of social analysis that remains astonishing, even though the novel itself today seems quite thin. In *Augie March,* there is almost no "analysis" at all in this sense, and it is interesting to observe that the one point where we most clearly do have it—the Mexican episode involving Trotsky—seems false to the tone and even the pattern of the whole. The texture of the novel is, to be sure, densely social, but almost everything that it has to say about social stresses exists entirely and deeply in the context of experience itself. Yet where the character of the hero in *Tono Bungay* does "develop", however jerkily, so that he finds himself at the end a considerably different man from what he started as or even from what he expected to become, the character of Augie does not develop, he only becomes more articulately aware of what he already is.

"I had the kind of character that looked for ease and places where I could lie down." True; but the important point there is that his is a character that does have the urge to *look,* even when Augie himself does not understand what he is looking for.

> What did I, out of all this, want for myself? I couldn't have told you. My brother Simon wasn't much my senior, and he and others at our age already had got the idea there was a life to lead and had chosen their directions, while I was circling yet. . . . I know I longed very much, but I didn't understand for what.

He has an appetite for experience, for full experience in the center of things, away from "the edge where I heard only echoes and couldn't even see the trains." He is open, without pre-judgment, pliant up to a point, sometimes almost passive ("there was something adoptional about me . . . something about me suggested adoption. And then there were some people who were especially adoption-minded"), so that he is always swiftly drawn into experience and never rejects it before an experimental try. But equally important is the fact that he had "opposition" in him, the "great desire to offer resistance and to say 'No!' " To say "No", that is, at the point where the experience threatens to say "No" to him, to his need for "circling", when it begins to shut down, to limit, to steer him in one way. Then he says "No", but he is always saying it, as episode follows upon episode, in the name of a larger "Yes". And this is perhaps his only genuine commitment: the sense of himself in relation to all the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

still unexplored experience in which he may further discover himself. It is as psychologically sound that he should so often seem to be getting into other men's clothes, as it is morally necessary that he be without the impulse to power. "I didn't mount the step of power. I could have done so from love, but not to get to the objective."

> I just didn't have the calling to be a union man or in politics, or any notion of my particle of will coming before the ranks of a mass that was about to march forward from misery. How would this will of mine have got there to lead the way? I couldn't just order myself to become one of those people who do go out before the rest, who stand and intercept the big social ray, or collect and concentrate it like burning glass, who glow and dazzle and make bursts of fire. It wasn't what I was meant to be.

What Augie chiefly has is the impulse, in a special and concrete kind, to make all knowledge his province.

> I still had the craving that I had given in to all summer long when I had lived on books, to have the reach to grasp both ends of the frame and turn the big image-taking glass to any scene of the world.

He is self-educated in two ways, in his omnivorous reading and in his wide living, and the result is that he moves everywhere, touches all sides.

> I was around people of other kinds too. In one direction, a few who read whopping books in German or French and knew their physics and botany manuals backwards, readers of Nietzsche and Spengler. In another direction, the criminals. Except that I never thought of them as such, but as the boys I knew in the poolroom and saw also at school, dancing the double-toddle in the gym at lunch hour, or in the hot-dog parlors. I touched all sides, and nobody knew where I belonged. I had no good idea of that myself.

He "touched all sides" in order to arrive ultimately at precisely that idea. The consequence is ironically described by the girl Stella, when, with quite another intention, she asks and answers, "What have you got of your own? . . . You don't have anything, do you?"

He is, one would guess, the free man. It is only the free man who can tell us what Augie tells us in the end, that the value of life lies in the act of living. And if we need now another set of *Adventures* to define the consequences of *that* discovery, the thematic progression moving on to take account of *integration,* we have had, in the present work, a brilliant achievement, and a long stride ahead in a career, in an unfolding imagination, whose very coherence promises to be a beautiful thing.

The novel has faults. Augie has two fantasy-like love affairs, both with creatures who could exist only under Kleig lights, and we may legitimately be reminded of Charles Dickens for the sentimentalization of certain female types no less than for the lavish profusion of sharply drawn characters, perhaps a hundred of them, ranging up and down through many classes and kinds. As

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the characterization is sometimes shaky, so is the style, extraordinary as this is when it is riding along at its high best. The originality of the style lies not only in a certain controlled looseness of syntax, a fine "running down" in the sentences, but also, and more particularly, in the juxtaposition of colloquial and slangy diction with a literate allusiveness:

> My heart whanged without pity for me. I already saw myself humbled in the dust of love, the god Eros holding me down with his foot and forcing all kinds of impossible stuff on me.

This is not only highly eloquent, it is the essence of Augie. Yet sometimes Mr. Bellow, like the god Eros, forces it too hard, and it falters ("one of those Walden or Innisfree wattle jobs"), and then we have no eloquence, and no Augie, either. By and large, the style is a real achievement, and not only as a means to loosening up the novel as a genre, but as a means of characterization. Augie is a lower middle-class product, and he never loses the marks of his class; indeed, he trails its whole ambience with him wherever he moves. To this one can attribute the wonderful "physicality" of this style, no less than its basis in the vernacular.

> Every time she said this I was so moved that happy gratitude poured over me down to my very feet while my back-hair prickled. Like when you're swimming in the pleasure of the sea and feel some contact come up behind. All the deep breathes like silent concertinas and the shore is gay with stripes and bunting.

Augie is also a wide reader, and it is as a part of his appetite for experience and his desire to make something of his experience, a desire to find parallels, to relate as well as to assimilate, that the allusiveness is just.

> I'm thinking of the old tale of Croesus, with Einhorn in the unhappy part. First the proud rich man, huffy at Solon, who, right or wrong in their argument over happiness, must have been the visiting Parisian of his day, and condescending to a rich island provincial. I try to think why didn't the warmth of wisdom make Solon softer than I believe he was to the gold- and jewel-owning semibarbarian. But anyway he was right. And Croesus, who was wrong, taught his lesson with tears to Cyrus, who spared him from the pyre. This old man, through misfortune, became a thinker and mystic and advice-giver. Then Cyrus lost his head to the revengeful queen who ducked it in a skinful of blood and cried, "You wanted blood? Here, drink!" And his crazy son Cambyses inherited Croesus and tried to kill him in Egypt as he had put his own brother to death and wounded the poor bull-calf Apis and made the head-and-body-shaved priests grim. The Crash was Einhorn's Cyrus and the bank failures his pyre, the poolroom his exile from Lydia and the hoodlums Cambyses, whose menace he managed, somehow, to get round.

Or such a Passage as this, which occurs in the long episode that has to do with Thea, who is determined that an eagle can be trained to hunt like a hawk:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> I can remember a cousin of Grandma Lausch who recited 'The Eagle', by Lermontov, in Russian; which I didn't dig, but the elocution was wonderful and romantic. She was dark, she had black eyes, her throat was ardent but her hands rather powerless. She was much younger than Grandma, and her husband was a furrier. I'm only trying to gather together what a city-bred man knew of eagles altogether, and it's curious: the eagle of money, the high-flying eagles of Bombay, the NRA eagle with its gear and lightnings, the bird of Jupiter and of nations, of republics as well as of Caesar, of legions and soothsayers, Colonel Julian the Black Eagle of Harlem; also the ravens of Noah and Elijah, which may well have been eagles; the lone eagle, animal president. And as well, robber and carrion feeder. Well, given time, we all catch up with legends. . . .

It seems quite possible that in *The Adventures of Augie March* we have caught up with another.

ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

Formulas and Fictions[1]

IT IS SO WONDERFULLY *serious*, the contemporary novel! Dipping briefly into the slippery current of today's fiction, one can scarcely help feeling this awful solemnity as its most appalling characteristic. A thousand times the critics have distinguished the good work of fiction as the "serious" work of fiction, have begged for high seriousness in reader and writer. Well, they are getting it—or at least a portentous artistic solemnity which seems to be the best available *Ersatz*. The new seriousness is to be distinguished from those various shades of earnest melancholy which pool in the dismal swamps of moral uplift and social science; above all else it is serious about its own effects, its own patterns, itself as a performance. Thus the reader often feels he is being sacrificed, not to a barbarous alien creed, but as part of a dress rehearsal for an academic ceremony. Not to eat, not for love, not even for display; one has the curious sensation of intruding between the author and his mirror, where anything less than ritual solemnity is sacrilege.

[1] THE HORSEMAN ON THE ROOF, by *Jean Giono*. Knopf. $4.00. THE PRESENT AND THE PAST, by *Ivy Compton-Burnett*. Julian Messner. $3.50. GRATEFUL TO LIFE AND DEATH, by *R. K. Narayan*. Michigan State College Press. $3.00. DINNER WITH THE COMMENDATORE, by *Mario Soldati*. Knopf. $3.50. THE HIVE, by *Camilio José Cela*. Farrar, Straus & Young. $3.50. COUSIN BAZILIO, by *Eça de Queiroz*. Noonday Press. $4.00. LITTLE NOVELS OF SICILY, by *Giovanni Verga*. Grove Press. $3.00. THE PONDER HEART, by *Eudora Welty*. Harcourt, Brace. $3.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

M. Jean Giono has in the past been guilty of some forms of old-fashioned seriousness, largely pantheistic, Bergsonian, and rural. His first writings celebrated the peasantry of Haute Provence, the energetic existence of the illiterate, the joys of onion soup and the turning year; he brought to them a kind of ritual intensity for which Thomas Hardy provides the least misleading English parallel. But lately he has been emancipated; and *The Horseman on the Roof* is a glorious complicated version of Horace's old joke, the one that begins "Integer vitae scelerisque purus." About M. Giono's version one cannot decently intimate much more than that its chief ingredients are cholera morbus, landscapes, egotism, and *sprezzatura*. Two young people accomplish a rather complicated pilgrimage across Southern France toward Italy through the heat of the great plague of 1838. They discover all sorts of interesting things about fear, geography, morality, the psychology of cholera, and themselves; the novel is one which combines violent physical suspense with the most rigorous antiheroism and a manner which is not only sec but triple-sec—to the point of astringency. M. Giono's Angelo is an Italian hero such as lived only in the imagination of Stendhal, an aristocratic *carbonaro* with splendid instincts and a bad habit of rational, destructive self-analysis. He does not, thank God, come to Understand his Heritage or Accept his Role or cure himself of alcoholism—I think these are the favorite accomplishments of the social engineer turned novelist. He does not even consummate the fiction in the way traditional to sentimental comedians. Figuratively as well as literally, he is a horseman on the roof, a flight or two above the bedchamber. When the good go crazy and start lynching him, he takes to the roofs of Manosque; and from this lofty and insecure perch, proceeds to assert his own Narcissistic and charming self with a wild and whirling energy which defies external justification.

Whether the gasconades with which M. Giono provides him are adequately spiritual or, in part at least, theatrical may be debated; the question is no doubt ultimately one of personal temper. But it raises an issue for the reviewer. If he describes the novel as an entertainment he will be inviting condescension; if, on the other hand, he belabors it with those terms so dear to the modern critical vocabulary, "symbol," "sensibility," "ironic," "tension," and so on, he will be making a fool of himself and laying the cold hand of death on a book whose supreme achievement is the wirey bounding line of its thought and action. M. Giono's novel offers the immense challenge to critics of deciding by what title one vitality is real while another is false; it is gratifying to think that perhaps this problem cannot be solved by any known system of critical mechanics. In any case, it is no problem to readers of the book, who will certainly be happy and I hope not few. *The Horseman on the Roof* is a wonderful *jeu d'ésprit*, redeeming by its wit and spirit a whole gaggle of novels which supinely yield themselves up to a critical formula because they have been written according to one.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

After M. Giono's elegant fiction, one gropes a little among the books of the quarter for a worthy second. The work of Miss Ivy Compton-Burnett has been before the public for a long time; and I do not think anyone has yet been so impudent as to accuse her of seriousness. *The Present and the Past* is an intricate domestic novel about 5 children, 5 servants, and 5 gentry, whose complex entanglements are brilliantly conveyed through the magic glass of the simple declarative sentence. All 15 of these personalities are gifted, as usual, with total recall and a sporting devotion to the rigors of verbal fence; as a result, family life in Great Britain is made to resemble closely that of the Brazilian piranha. The cold-blooded mobility of the species is highly diverting, if a little indiscriminate. For the celebrated austerity of Miss Compton-Burnett's technique I have nothing but the highest respect; her satiric weapons are lean, limber, and lovely indeed. But occasionally one wonders if they are not too sharp to control. Where everyone is coldly observing the selfish motives of others, it may become a question whether the coldness of the observer or the selfishness of the observed is chiefly in view. About Cassius Clare and the deliciously named Mrs. Frost there is not much question; about most of the other characters, particularly Cassius' two wives, there is at least the shadow of an uncertainty. And where everything else is so crisp and taut, the wavering of a momentary sympathy may amount almost to a case of the staggers. Devotees of the author need not worry; her bow is not unstrung, her arrows are still keen, and if she fails of absolute control, it is only because her own standards set her far above the approximate.

Miss Compton-Burnett writes as in bright armor, defying one to find a chink; because of its very invulnerability, her work lacks something in expressiveness and fluidity. M. Giono's is a lawless, episodic, negligent style based on improvisation and audacity. But both have a hard, cold eye for the correct behavior of good people which is perfectly satisfying. The other books of the quarter assume a more docile perspective, when they have a perspective at all. Mr. R. K. Narayan, who bids fair to become known as the best Indian novelist with the worst luck in titles, has published a story which ought to be named, as it once was, *The English Teacher,* but which is now called *Grateful to Life and Death.* It is a study in goodness, happiness, and foolishness, in that order. The author's touch is so light, his tone so social, that one half-expects his hero's adventures in spirit-rapping with his dead wife to end in the same sort of half-comic debacle as his efforts to buy a house. They do not; the restlessness and self-criticism in terms of which the whole story has been told find their meaning, it would seem, in the final apparition of Susila to her husband. This conclusion poses a number of problems for the reader, which need only be suggested; the author's evident talent for domestic comedy and the freshness of his background materials should render his book acceptable beyond the strict confines of Theosophist opinion.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mario Soldati's *Dinner with the Commendatore* is a set of three romantic stories supposed to be told by Commendatore P.G.C., the operatic impresario. The first is worldly, rueful, and jocose, involving love, war, and fraud—very well; the second, an incident of sudden conversion, makes less of an impression; the third, concerning a lady named Twinkle in pursuit of her long-lost lover, completes the disappointment. At the other end of the scale, Camilo José Cela has started a huge bitter novel of modern Spain, the first volume of which appears under the title of *The Hive*. It is a bundle of related and unrelated incidents concerning a great many uniformly sordid individuals, largely without character, who couple and uncouple morosely, while their attention remains riveted to the last or the next cup of coffee. The total effect, when the book's architecture is more advanced, may be either monotonous or grandiose or conceivably both. For the moment, *The Hive* belongs on one's bookshelf between *Germinal* and *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan*, a drab and downright document which may some day conceivably be more than an honest book.

Two Continental reprints from the late 19th century went to swell the current of the quarter's fiction. *Cousin Bazilio* by Eça de Queiroz is a Portuguese version of *Madame Bovary*, published in 1878 and altogether on a much smaller scale than its original. The bravura of Flaubert's book is subdued here; there is nothing to compare with the incomparable ironies of the weekend at Vaubyessard, nothing akin to the carving of Hippolyte, no equivalent to the relished peasant background, hence very little of that savage perspective on the 19th century which marks Flaubert's novel. Queiroz' story is set in Lisbon; Cousin Bazilio is a Rodolphe, Luiza an Emma, and the verbal parallels are sometimes striking. A principal addition is the figure of a malevolent serving-woman, who blackmails our heroine for quite a long time. The whole performance is, in effect, interesting for the light it casts on the older book; it is as if Flaubert's file had been reversed and used to flatten out as many as possible of those peaks, angles, and points which make of *Madame Bovary* such a luminous, faceted, gleaming production. The difference is that between a real diamond and a cultured pearl; which is not to say that the lesser novel does not have its own glow and modest lustre.

Giovanni Verga's *Little Novels of Sicily* are scarcely flaming novelties. Translated by D. H. Lawrence in 1925 from the *Novelle Rusticane* which Verga published in 1883, the stories deal with Sicily in the 1850's and '60's. For some of them Garibaldi is still in the unfathomable future. The stories themselves are in the nature of *tours-de-force*, cruel little idylls of peasant life written in peasant speech by a man whose other (one cannot say "real") personality was much softer and more conventional. They are in effect dramatic monologues, to be thought of as spoken by the folk, embittered, melodramatic, and richly colloquial. About most folky writing of this sort there lurks the taint of artificiality and, worst of all, condescension; Verga's peasants have a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

voluble intensity which is always full and unforced. Lawrence's translation, despite an occasional intrusive note from the Midlands, a word like "lass" or "navvy", is properly exuberant. But the last little sketch, "Across the Sea", is a genuine oddity, a nostalgic bit of autobiography which puts the other stories, as it were, in a frame, and suddenly lengthens one's perspective on them to that in which Verga seems to have held them himself. The effect is something like that which might be produced by a note appended to the short stories of Erskine Caldwell indicating that they had been written by Noel Coward for the amusement of a Mayfair playmate. Verga's Sicilian writings are evidently a triumph of art, but it is a genuine triumph, a solid and self-respecting performance without a false note or strained effect in it.

Eudora Welty's *The Ponder Heart*, on the other hand, exemplifies the same technique overtaken by literary seriousness. Uncle Daniel Ponder and Miss Edna Earle, Miss Teacake Magee, and Miss Bonnie Dee Peacock exhibit all the squeaky energy and self-conscious buffoonery of television comedians. They strain, they caper, they make free with the time-honored stage props, they wallow in idiom; and, my, aren't they *nice* folks? Only old Gladney, that no-count lawyer, is mean enough to think Uncle Daniel would be mean enough to kill Miss Bonnie Dee dead . . . well, you see how it goes. The capering masquerade is pursued with such deadly intentness that life is fairly driven from the premises. Surely Miss Welty knows better than this. If she could relax a little the seriousness with which she persecutes her reader and her characters, allowing the reader to react without feeling manipulated and the characters to behave without seeming to perform, her genuine talent for language might make its proper impression. For the moment, she had best sell Uncle Daniel and his kinfolk across the river and into 3-D where they belong; if they can be segregated there, Miss Welty may yet write an adult entertainment.

JOSEPH FRANK

Formal Criticism and Abstract Art

At first glance, it would be difficult to imagine two books[1] more opposed than those of Heinrich Wölfflin and Herbert Read. Wölfflin's great work, written more than fifty years ago, is a loving analysis of the great masters of the Italian Renaissance; Read's book is an enthusiastic and impassioned defence

[1]CLASSIC ART, by *Heinrich Wölfflin*. Phaidon Publishers. $6.50. A PHILOSOPHY OF MODERN ART, by *Herbert Read*. Horizon Press. $4.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of precisely those aspects of modern art that have brought the Renaissance tradition of naturalism into disrepute. Wölfflin praises Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo and Andrea del Sarto for their narrative skill in depicting a motif, the dramatic vividness and expressiveness resulting from their formal clarity; these qualities have become so alien to modern art that Read never once mentions them in the course of his book. Yet, despite this radical opposition, there is nonetheless a hidden unity between these two books; and this unity, once revealed, tells us a good deal about the often subterranean linkages that make up the "climate" of an historical epoch.

Wölfflin wrote his book in the very same years that modern art was breaking with the Renaissance tradition of painting; and however much he loved this tradition, Wölfflin was preparing the way for its theoretical supersession. For Wölfflin saw the history of art as the autonomous unfolding of certain formal visual categories; these formal aspects were primarily, though not exclusively, what he sought to define in Renaissance painting; and a critic like Roger Fry, defending modern painting, could later argue that *only* these formal aspects were relevant for art criticism. Wölfflin himself never wrote a line about Post-Impressionist art, and would certainly have decried any attempt to push his critical position to this extreme. Yet, whether willingly or not, there is no doubt that much of Wölfflin's enormous influence is the result of this concatenation between his critical interests and the revolutionary development of the plastic arts in modern times.

I

Heinrich Wölfflin came on the German critical scene at the end of the last century, when academic art-criticism in Germany and elsewhere was completely dominated by positivist assumptions. Scholars had done a great deal of work in classifying art-objects and in exploring their historical backgrounds; but there was a growing feeling that, while all this had a good deal to do with history, it had very little to do with art. The historical emphasis, it is true, was justified as a necessary preparation for criticism. But so much energy was absorbed by the former task that none was left over for the latter—and the means very quickly became the end. Protests first arose, as might have been expected, outside academic circles—from, to be exact, a German sculptor named Adolf Hildebrand who wrote a little book called *The Problem of Form*. Hildebrand argued that art was more than merely the expression of its time or of the personality of the individual artist. Art, Hildebrand said, was primarily the creation of certain visual forms; and these forms were the key to the understanding of the individual art-work. In the preface to the present book, Wölfflin calls Hildebrand's work "a refreshing shower upon parched earth"; and he rejects historicism for exactly the same reason as Hildebrand—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

because "the minor relationships are made the chief things, and the artistic content, which follows its own inner laws, is ignored."

Wölfflin's emphasis on "the artistic content, which follows its own inner laws" explains the revolutionary impact of his book on *Classic Art*. There is perhaps no other period in the history of art about which we are so well informed as the Italian Renaissance; no period in which so many details of the life and work of the greatest artists are a matter of record. And, perhaps for this reason, no other epoch has been so little appreciated and evaluated in artistic terms. The history of Renaissance art has been treated either as a series of biographical anecdotes, after the fashion of Vasari, or, after the fashion of Walter Pater, as a pretext for the critic to transcribe his emotional reactions. Neither of these approaches, of course, is without merit, and Wölfflin is not only an exacting scholar but—what is far rarer among German *Kunstgeschichtler*—the possessor of a light, limpid, sensitive prose style. Wölfflin, however, places both his knowledge and his literary gifts at the service of his own special interest: the "history of seeing", the formal patterns that constitute the schema within which all artists of the same period seem to work.

In the first half of the book, Wölfflin supplies a running commentary to the greatest works of Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, Fra Bartolommeo and Andrea del Sarto. Perhaps the best way to suggest his method is to quote his distinction between Giotto and Masaccio, made, by way of introduction, in a prefatory chapter on the Quattrocento. For Giotto, struggling to free himself from Byzantine influences, "everything is still glued together; he superimposes head upon head, without allowing himself sufficient space for all the bodies, and the architecture of the background is an uncertain, wavering stage-set without any real relation in scale to the figures." With Masaccio, on the other hand, "for the first time, the picture becomes a stage, constructed by establishing a unified point of vision; a space in which people, trees, houses, have their specific place, which can be geometrically calculated." There is a whole series of other distinctions describing the difference between Giotto's "decorative, flat style" and Masaccio's effort "to render the essence, the corporeality, in the full strength of natural effect"; and the formal evolution of Quattrocento art is contained within the terms of this polarity.

Not the Quattrocento, however, but the first quarter of the Cinquecento—the High Renaissance—is Wölfflin's favorite domain, and it is impossible to do justice to the wealth of subtle observation that he lavishes on the analysis of individual works from this period. But his analysis—whether it concentrates on axial relations, or on the symmetry of balancing masses—rarely strays beyond the bounds of formal appreciation. Even when he points out the felicity of a dramatic motif, Wölfflin usually does so to illustrate the High Renaissance skill in harmonizing dramatic action and formal equilibrium. From this point of view, Wölfflin sees the stylistic development from the Quattro-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cento to the High Renaissance as a movement from proliferating diversity to unified visual expression.

The Quattrocento, he points out, preferred "the flicker of light and shade" and its painters "took delight in caprices and in the multiplicity of small surface modulations"; the High Renaissance favored "a simple style based on large planes" and *its* painters show "a desire for large, still, masses of light and shade." The Quattrocento, "in its attempt to render movement at any cost," searched for complicated poses; the High Renaissance returned "to the elementary vertical and horizontal for major axes of direction, and the primitive full-face and pure profile aspects." Quattrocento groups tend to be conglomerations of isolated figures; the High Renaissance obtains emotional unity by carefully calculated contrasts of expressive attitude and gesture. "The old method of looking at close range," Wölfflin writes, "searching for individual detail and wandering about the picture from part to part is abandoned, and the composition has to make its effect as a whole."

Certain aspects of this evolution, to be sure, may be linked with non-formal correlations; and, in the second part of the book, Wölfflin has two excellent chapters discussing the "new ideals" of High Renaissance art and the "new beauty" that embodied these ideals. For High Renaissance art, through its formal innovations, attained an effect of "classic repose" which corresponded to certain social changes in the period. Quattrocento art was still essentially bourgeois, the product of flourishing and independent mercantile communities; but as we come to the High Renaissance, "a bourgeois art is transformed into an aristocratic one which adopts the distinctive criteria of demeanour and feeling prevalent among the upper classes, and, accordingly, the whole Christian cosmos, saints and heroes, had to be re-styled into aristocrats." The "new beauty", as a result, demanded a weighty, dignified monumentality that Wölfflin discerns everywhere—in the handling of drapery as well as in the proportions of High Renaissance architecture. But while these factors may have affected the content of High Renaissance art, Wölfflin maintains that the formal development ran its own independent course. "The noble gestures of the Cinquecento, its restrained bearing and its spacious and strong beauty characterize the feelings of the generation," he writes in the last chapter of the book; "but all the things we have analyzed so far—clarity of presentation, the desire of the cultivated eye for ever richer and more significant images, until the point is reached where multiplicity can be seen as a coherent unity and the parts can be fused into an inevitable whole (unity)—these are all formal elements which cannot be deduced from the spirit of the age."

So long as we remain within the limits that Wölfflin set for himself, his conclusions are unassailable and his accomplishment cannot be too highly praised. Despite the lapse of time since its first appearance, *Classic Art* is still the finest introduction to the art of the Italian Renaissance and one of the finest intro-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ductions extant to art in general. No other modern art critic can compare with Wölfflin in sharpening our sensitivity to visual form; no one else can so well train the eye to "read" a picture as a formal problem for which the artist sought a solution. Wölfflin, it is not too much to say, taught the modern world to "see" the art of the Italian Renaissance with fresh eyes, cleansed from the accretions of centuries of erudition. And, as we read, we feel that his standpoint is that of the artists themselves, who would have recognized their own preoccupations in his pages.

Only if we transgress Wölfflin's own boundaries do we find any grounds for criticism, or, rather do we begin to sense the limitations of his method. For in the present volume, Wölfflin tends to write as if the stylistic evolution he traces furnished an unchallenged criterion of artistic value—as if formal progress and artistic worth were interchangeable concepts. The crudities of the Quattrocento are continually contrasted unfavorably with the complex formal triumphs of the High Renaissance, and no other standard of judgment is introduced. Yet one may feel that this point of view is by no means definitive—that an artist like Giotto, expressively speaking, is far greater and profounder than Andrea del Sarto, despite all the latter's compositional skill; and that a good deal of Raphael, to a modern taste, is unbearably sentimental. Wölfflin never broaches this issue explicitly, but he touches on the question of value-criteria in a revealing footnote. "It is a sign of an advance in the modern appreciation of pictures," he notes, "that the decorative, flat style of Giotto is now recognized as something of cardinal importance. Yet one must guard against the bias which would make this quality the most important thing in art." (I presume this remark is directed against the pre-Raphaelite vogue of the late nineteenth-century.) One must equally guard against the bias that would make the *opposite* of this quality the most important thing in art; and in fact, Wölfflin later used his stylistic concepts exclusively for analytical purposes. In this early work, however, there is an unfortunate tendency to blur the distinction between the analytical and the evaluative.

After publishing his *Classic Art*, Wölfflin pursued his stylistic researches and, in 1915, gave them definitive form in his epoch-making book *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (*Principles of Art History*). Along with Henri Focillon's *La Vie des Formes*, Wölfflin's book is one of the most important esthetic works to appear in the first half of the twentieth century; and its impact on the study of the plastic arts was instantaneous. Here, Wölfflin concentrated on the development of art from the High Renaissance to the Baroque—from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century. This evolution, he contended, could be circumscribed with five pairs of stylistic concepts. For within this period, art moved from a *linear style* to a *painterly style*, from the *plane* to *recession in depth*, from a *closed form* to an *open form*, from *multiplicity* to *unity*, from the *absolute clarity* of a subject seen as a plastic whole to a *relative clarity* in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which light and color are no longer subordinate to plastic form. This last distinction, as Wölfflin remarks, is closely linked to the first one between linear and painterly (*malerisch*), and gives the sense of this latter term. Wölfflin illustrates these categories with his usual brilliant scrupulousness; and to those who may wonder why multiplicity is suddenly attributed to the High Renaissance, it should be pointed out that the ascription is relative. High Renaissance art has greater visual unity than the Quattrocento even though, like the latter, it preserved individual plastic contours; but this preservation of contour gives it the appearance of multiplicity compared to the dissolution of plastic form in the relative clarity of the Baroque.

Not only did Wölfflin imply that the order of this evolution was irreversible, but also that it could be used to explain any period in the history of art; and this latter idea evoked a storm of controversy that has not yet died down. This is not the place, however, to discuss the vast amount of learned polemic devoted to Wölfflin's theories. But it is worth noting that in 1933 he published some reflections on his *Grundbegriffe* which are now included in a volume of incidental essays, *Gedanken zur Kunstgeschichte*. For the most part, Wölfflin continues to adhere stubbornly to his position; he does recognize, nonetheless, that the relation of his "immanent" history of seeing to other aspects of history poses a considerable problem.

"Our reflections," he concedes, "have not been concerned with art in the full meaning of the word, for we have not taken into account a decisive aspect, the world of the material. To this latter world belongs not only the question of what (morphological) forms a century creates in, but also how men feel about themselves and their rational and emotional attitude toward things. The problem, then, reduces itself to whether our history of seeing may truly be called an independent history. And this is clearly not the case. . . . Tied to the material world, [it] has always regulated itself according to the demands of time and race." Yet Wölfflin ends these reconsiderations with a renewed affirmation of the value of his morphology of forms—and he has every right to do so. Whether or not they are universally applicable, Wölfflin's categories have provided art-historians with a conceptual (and perceptual) vocabulary that has led to a new precision in the apprehension of formal esthetic qualities. And if the function of a great critic is to bring his audience into a more intimate contact with the work of art *qua* work of art, Heinrich Wölfflin is among the greatest critics of modern times.

II

The juxtaposition of Wölfflin's book on the Italian Renaissance with Herbert Read's *Philosophy of Modern Art* leads to something of a paradox. Wölfflin, dealing with the content-laden art of the Renaissance, rigidly restricts himself

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to structural form; Read, the zealous champion of an abstract and constructivist art of pure form, devotes a good deal of intellectual ingenuity to justifying its symbolic significance. Each critic, it would seem, is intent on stressing the most recondite aspect of his favorite style. I am afraid, however, that Wölfflin comes off far better in this exercise than Read; for while the formal structures that Wölfflin analyzes are immediately evident, the symbolic value that Read attributes to abstract art is a far more dubious quantity.

Read's book is a collection of essays written on various occasions over the past fifteen years, and Sir Herbert himself apologizes for what "is perhaps a grandiloquent title". Yet the book does contain a philosophy of modern art, if only fragmentarily, and it is Read's great merit that he has never shirked this philosophical responsibility. All too many critics are content to subsist on second-hand scraps of outworn philosophical and esthetic theories; but Read, throughout a lengthy career, has maintained an invigorating receptivity to currents of thought blowing from all directions. One may sometimes feel, it is true, that he has been a bit too much of a weather cock—but the Anglo-American critical scene would have been far poorer, and far less stimulating, if Herbert Read had not been there to champion the cause of Reason (as he did, with T. S. Eliot, in the Twenties), to throw himself into Marx, Freud, Surrealism and Anarchism (as he did in the Thirties), and to attempt a synthesis of Existentialism and abstract art (as he appears to be doing in the chief essays in the present volume).

The problem that has long preoccupied Read's attention is, indeed, the basic question for any philosophy of modern art. Since the early years of this century, the plastic arts have experienced one of the great stylistic revolutions of art-history—a revolution comparable in scope, though opposite in direction, to the Renaissance development whose formal features Wölfflin so masterfully described. Several essays trace the historical course of this modern movement in art; and, along with Read's earlier book *Art Now,* these are probably the best introduction to the various schools and theories of modern art to have appeared in English. There are also a series of short pieces on individual artists such as Picasso, Paul Klee, Naum Gabo and Henry Moore, and several more theoretical essays on esthetic problems. It is from these latter and from scattered remarks in the others that we may deduce Read's philosophical apologia for modern art.

Sir Herbert dedicates his book to Wilhelm Worringer, whom he calls "my esteemed master in the philosophy of art", and Worringer's ideas have contributed no little to shaping Read's views. Worringer is the German art-historian who, in a famous work called *Abstraktion und Einfühlung,* devoted himself to studying the historic alternation between organic styles in art, such as the Greek and the Renaissance, and styles tending toward hieratic formalization such as the Egyptian and the Byzantine. For the first time he placed both

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on an equal esthetic footing, and, in so doing, he provided modern art with a pedigree and a rationale. After Worringer, it was no longer possible to look on the development of Western art since the Renaissance as the slow attainment of perfection, and to regard any infraction of its canons either as sensationalism or incompetence. It was necessary to recognize that non-organic styles, tending toward abstraction, might have their own validity and their own *raison d'être.*

According to Worringer, this alternation between organic and non-organic styles satisfied diverse metaphysical impulses. Organic styles, according to Read's paraphrase, are "the result of a happy pantheistic relation between man and the outside world, the tendency to abstraction, on the contrary, occurs in races whose attitude to the outside world is the exact contrary of this." Or, as Read puts it elsewhere, "abstraction is the reaction of man confronted with the abyss of nothingness, the expression of an *Angst* which distrusts or renounces the organic principle." It may well be, as Read suggests, that Worringer's ideas had a direct influence on the evolution of modern art through Kandinsky and the *Blaue Reiter* group in Munich; but they served, in any case, to justify and explain the influence on modern art of primitive and hieratic styles.

The modern situation, however, is by no means as simple as the one that Worringer describes. In the present chaos of conflicting schools, every conceivable style has its fervent adherents; the same artist at different periods may create either in a style approximating more closely to realism or to abstraction. In Read's view, "we seem to have reached a stage of development where an individual choice is possible. . . . Such ambivalence in the artist proves that the human will can intervene as a process in the existential dialectic. The freedom to create is thus to be interpreted as a freedom to affirm and intensify the life-process itself (which would imply a naturalistic art) or as a freedom to create a new order of reality, distinct from the life-process, but enhancing the independent spiritual powers of man's isolated consciousness (which would imply an abstract and transcendental art)."

These are the general outlines of Read's philosophy of modern art, and, as we can see, it leaves the way open for the widest diversity of artistic inspiration. No one would wish to quarrel with this tolerant catholicism of taste; but there is no reason to surrender all critical judgment and to refuse to distinguish between pretension and achievement. One may recognize the metaphysical validity of an art-style without blinding oneself to the inherent limitations that narrow its creative scope. And Read, in my view, fails to hold this balance in the case of modern abstract art, i.e., a non-objective art of pure form.

Once the ordinary prejudices against abstract art have been overcome, Read is well aware that the problem of its critical justification begins rather than ends. For the most damning criticism of abstract art is that which finds it sensuously pleasant but expressively trivial, and which assigns it only a decora-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tive value. In an earlier work on *Art and Society*, Read himself formulated this point of view as cogently as it has ever been put. "To arrange form and color in an attractive pattern," he wrote, "undoubtedly requires the exercise of a refined esthetic sensibility, but once the result was achieved it could not stand comparison, in all that art has meant to humanity, with the highest products of representational art. For these, in addition to a decorative appeal fully as strong as that of any abstract composition, had given the extra values of psychological interest or idealistic fancy." Read did not accept this judgment in 1937, nor does he accept it now; but it cannot be said that he makes out any convincing case for its revision.

Non-objective art, according to Read, is the purest example of the creation of a "new order of reality" independent of nature, and, as a result, "art in this sense becomes the most precious evidence of freedom." He then correlates non-objective art with Existentialism as a crucial expression of the modern psyche. "We have now reached a stage of relativism in philosophy where it is possible to affirm that reality is in fact subjectivity," he asserts, "which means that the individual has no choice but to construct his own reality, however arbitrary and even 'absurd' that may seem." Even if this parallel were absolutely accurate,[2] however, one might still argue that Read has fallen victim to the genetic fallacy. The possible origins of non-objective art in the present cultural situation do not prove that, as works of art, its products have more than decorative significance. Nor is it sufficient to dismiss this criticism as another example of the problem that arises "whenever the public is confronted with an original or 'difficult' type of art." It is not the difficulty of abstract art but its simplicity that is the gravamen of the present criticism; not that abstract art creates an incomprehensible "new order of reality" but rather that the reality it creates is, with the best will in the world, so threadbare and so poverty-stricken.

And when Herbert Read, with his usual honesty, tries to come to grips with the "new order of reality" expressed by abstract art, the result is a deplorable intellectual chaos. Writing of the constructivism of Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner, and referring in passing to the neo-plasticism of Mondrian, Read explains: "The particular vision of reality common to the constructivism of Pevsner and Gabo is derived, not from the superficial aspects of a mechanized civilization, nor from the reduction of visual data to their 'cubic planes' or 'plastic values' (all these activities being merely variations of a naturalistic art), but from an insight into the structural processes of the physical universe

[2]"Heidegger and Sartre . . . are, profoundly, ontologists: they aim at constructing a 'science of things'. This purpose is particularly marked in Heidegger, but Sartre has not disavowed it and *L'Etre et le Néant* officially claims to be an ontology. These two ontologies are 'phenomenological', but this changes nothing as regards their nature as a universal science, that is, applicable to the universality of being and valid for the universality of mankind." Régis Jolivet: *Les doctrines existentialistes de Kierkegaard à J. P. Sartre.*, p. 15.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as revealed by modern science." Elsewhere, Read describes such art as "an aesthetic revelation of the elements of reality—that is to say . . . a description or concrete representation of the elements of space and time."

It is difficult to understand why, if non-objective art creates a *new* order of reality, this order should suddenly turn out to be that of modern science. If it is true, as Read maintains, that "the best preparation for the appreciation of constructivist art is a study of Whitehead or Schrödinger", this would be the clearest proof for the very opposite of Read's thesis: namely, that there is nothing new about the order of reality created by this style, which thus cannot serve as a symbol for the capacity of human freedom to create independently of nature. Moreover, it is even more difficult to understand how one can possibly give a *concrete* representation of the elements of space and time. Even if we accept Kant's view that space and time are forms of sensuous intuition, these forms in themselves have no sensuous equivalents; it is nothing but mumbo-jumbo to talk of representing them or their elements. And Kant's forms, after all, were based on old-fashioned Newtonian concepts that still had some relation to sensuous perception. Modern art presumably will have nothing to do with anything less than Einsteinian spacetime, which not only cannot be perceived but actually violates the conditions of sensuous perception—the conditions within which all art destined for human beings must remain.

In the face of assertions such as these, one can only maintain that what we *see*, when we look at a Constructivist object, appears to be an attractively streamlined shape; what we *see*, when we look at a neo-plasticist painting, appears to be a more or less harmonious decorative pattern. These tell us nothing more about space and time, or about "pure reality", than the shape or decorative pattern on a Mesopotamian pot. And one begins to feel very much like Hans Christian Andersen's little boy, who could only keep repeating that, whatever anybody else might think, it was clear as day that the Emperor had no clothes. But perhaps the argument from authority will be more convincing than the argument from common sense, and I can only appeal to someone not unfamiliar with these matters—I am referring to Picasso. "The idea of research," he once remarked, "has often led painting into error and forced the artist into fruitless lucubrations. This is perhaps the main fault of modern art. The spirit of inquiry has poisoned all those who do not fully grasp the positive and fundamental elements of modern art, for it has led them to wish to paint the invisible and therefore the unpaintable."

I have no desire, however, to end this discussion of non-objective art on a negative note. In *Art and Society*, Herbert Read defended abstract art on what seems to me entirely legitimate grounds—as a necessary and indispensable aid to architecture and the industrial arts. He argued that the practice of non-objective art led to "a heightened sensibility to the purity of form, the economy of means and the relevance of color", and this is incontestably true. The ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ample of non-objective art has transformed the applied arts in a manner that can only be applauded, and one would have imagined that non-objective artists and their admirers would be satisfied with this considerable triumph. Unfortunately, this does not seem to have been the case: Read now speaks contemptuously of "cubist wall-papers, cubist linoleum, cubist lamp-shades, cubist electric fittings. . . ." One can only regret that, in attributing to abstract art a non-existent symbolic ballast, Herbert Read should thus have been led to deprecate its great positive contribution to the esthetic sensibility of the modern era.

ROBERT GRAVES

The Language as Spoken

THE OXFORD BOOK OF ENGLISH TALK, edited by *James Sutherland*. Oxford University Press. $5.00.

THE MAIN DIFFICULTIES THAT James Sutherland has had to face in forming this most instructive anthology are that the phonograph, dictaphone and tape-recorder are of only recent invention, and that transcribed talk has always tended to be 'improved', especially by playwrights, novelists and biographers. This process of improvement is so highly individualistic that, given an unsigned conversation to place, from the works of such near contemporaries as Shakespeare, Fletcher or Jonson, or of Dickens, Thackeray and Willkie Collins, an expert could hardly allot it to the wrong author. Which suggests that we have no real evidence as to how the originals of Mr. Justice Shallow and his neighbour Silence talked, or how the original Mrs. Gamp talked; and only indirect evidence as to how Shakespeare and Dickens themselves talked, or wished to talk. Granted, Shakespeare had a remarkably retentive memory for popular terms of speech; but though the following conversation from *2 Henry IV* carries almost complete conviction, it remains characteristically Shakespearean.

> *Shallow:* . . . Then was Jack Falstaffe (now Sir John) a boy, and page to Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolke.
>
> *Silence:* Coosin, this Sir John that comes hither anone about souldiers?
>
> *Shallow:* The same Sir John, the very same: I see him breake Skoggin's head at the Court-Gate, when a was a cracke, not thus high: and the very same day did I fight with one Sampson Stockefish, a fruiterer, behind Greyes-Inne. Jesu, Jesu, the mad dayes that I have spent! and to see how many of my olde acquaintance are dead!
>
> *Silence:* Wee shall all follow, coosin.
>
> *Shallow:* Certaine, 'tis certaine, very sure: death, as the Psalmist

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saith, is certaine to all, all shall die. How a good yoke of bullockes at Stamford Faire?

Silence: By my troth I was not there.

Shallow: Death is certaine. Is old Dooble of your towne living yet?

Silence: Dead, sir.

Shallow: Jesu, Jesu, dead! a drew a good bow: and dead? a shot a fine shoote. John a Gaunt loved him well, and betted much money on his head. Dead? a would have clapt i' the clowt at twelve-score, and carried you a forehand shaft a fourteene and fourteene and a half, that it would have doone a man's heart good to see. How a score of ewes now?

Silence: Thereafter as they be: a score of good ewes may be worth tenne pounds.

Shallow: And is old Dooble dead?

Likewise, Dickens served his apprenticeship as a novelist by a period of short-hand reporting, and should be a reliable authority on Early Victorian colloquial speech. But can one trust the accuracy of reporters? Even if they are not the modern police-court type who convert:

'Well now, I made out old Totty Fahy staggering up the lane, round about half past three it would be. My word, wasn't he soused? Soused to the gills, I'd say. . . .'

into:

'I observed the last witness approaching me from the southern end of Stagg's Lane at approximately 3:30 p.m. His gait was unsteady and I judged him to be intoxicated.'

Mr. Sutherland notes in his introduction that a recent exchange in a Coroner's court was recorded by the short-hand reporter of one evening paper:

The Coroner: When you went in to your wife were you quite clean and neat as you are now?—I don't make myself a mess walking about.

The Coroner: If you do get dirty, do you take the first opportunity to clean up?—I had a wash before I went to bed.

The Coroner: I have to ask you this, if anyone were to say they had seen you in London during the afternoon would they be wrong?—They would. I was not in London—

whereas a second evening paper offered its readers a quite different version of the words spoken:

The Coroner: Were you quite clean and neat, as you are now?—Yes.

If you get dirty you would take the first reasonable opportunity of having a wash?—I did have a sluice before going to bed.

If anybody were to say they had seen you during the afternoon in London, it would mean they were wrong?—Definitely; I was not in London from about 2:30 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.

Here both reporters seem to have taken gross liberties with the spoken word.

Mr. Sutherland's anthology pieces, arranged in dated sequence, suggest a constantly changing English speech-rhythm, as well as vocabulary. But one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cannot be sure that fourteenth-century language was as terse and bald as the following extract from *The Book of Margery Kempe* suggests:

Bishop: Why goest thou in white? Art thou a maiden?
Margery: Nay sir, I am no maiden, I am a wife.
[He commanded her to be fettered.]
Margery: I am none heretic, nor ye shall not prove me. . . .
Young Man: My lord, I will go with her.
Bishop: You be too young; I will not have you.

May the effect not be due to the labour and expense of scratching down a full conversation on sheepskin? However, once writing materials become cheap, records are more dependable; and it seems pretty certain that the individual speaking vocabulary grew richer, and speech rhythms more varied, until the mid-seventeenth century when (owing to a variety of causes, among them the Puritan revolution and the aristocratic campaign for linguistic decorum), a long recession took place, only interrupted by a slight recovery in the turbulent early nineteenth century. And one product of the public school tradition initiated by Dr. Arnold of Rugby has been so powerful a taboo on affected speech that nowadays a normal person's literary vocabulary is several times greater than his colloquial vocabulary, which is kept purposely uncultured. It would be surprising to hear a modern Englishman remark correctly:

'Although the owl cannot see clearly by daylight, yet at twilight none of us has nearly so keen a vision as he.'

He would say with modest lack of precision:

'Owls can't see by day, but, of course, none of us see nearly as well when it gets dark.'

It is only an occasional eccentric who. . . . Yes, I remember the head of an Oxford college who once cried out when his wife set her corsage alight with a spirit stove at a tea party for undergraduates:

'Ah, my dear, your bosom is a-fire! Pray, one of you gentlemen, will you be good enough to extinguish the blaze with the contents of the cream jug.'

There are, I reckon, six main types of English talker. The commonplace talker with the limited vocabulary and no ambition to extend it. The professional talker, whether canting beggar, blarney man, rhetorician, wit, barker or patter-artist, who makes a living by his trade. The natural talker who loves words and their use and has a huge, imaginative, well-controlled vocabulary. The rattle, who talks because he cannot help it. The meiotic, who is afraid of using words with emotion. The silentiary, or anti-talker, who is reluctant even to complete a short sentence. It is to be expected that the commonplace talker should appear in this anthology only as a foil to the professional, since he adds no sparkle to its pages, and that the professional talker should get most space, though his cant, rhetoric, wit or patter tends to be derivative and synthetic. The natural talker has been very rare since the reign of King James I.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Occasionally, however, he turns up in a criminal court or impromptu radio program and steals the show. Mr. Sutherland has included at least one example (1664) in James Turner, ex-roundhead lieutenant-colonel charged with robbing Francis Tryon, merchant, of £1,000 in cash and a deal of jewellery:

> *Turner:* My wife came to me publickly, I did not whisper with her—
>
> *Mrs. Turner:* Nay, look you, husband—
>
> *Turner:* Pr'ythee, Mall, sit down: you see, my Lord, my wife will interrupt me with nonsense. Pr'ythee sit thee down quickly, and do not put me out: I cannot hold women's tongues, nor your lordship neither.
>
> *Lord Chief Justice Bridgman:* This is not a May-game.
>
> *Turner:* My lord, it is a serious business, and I hope God will bless it.—'Pray,' said I, 'Mall, go; as you love and honour my life and credit, or anything that concerns me, I beg you to go.' 'Then I will go,' saith she; 'whither must I go to?' 'You must go to the further Tower-Hill, six doors beyond the little postern: now it is so much of the clock, from five to seven he will walk there. A fellow will come to you in black, that man that in the morning took the money from Jack, he will know you, and once in a quarter or half an hour he will come to you. If you do not find him in half an hour, stay no longer, but pack away to Whitechapel, ask for the Nag's-Head in Whitechapel, and once in a quarter of an hour you will have a man come to you, and take notice of you, and ask who you are; and you must say that you wait for one to give you somewhat: he will deliver you somewhat, and whatever he delivers you, bring it hither. . . .'
>
> I sent my poor wife away, and, saving your Lordship's presence, she did all bedirt herself, a thing she did not use to do, poor soul. She found this Nag's-Head, she sat down, being somewhat fat and weary, poor heart! I have had twenty-seven children by her, fifteen sons and twelve daughters. Seven or eight times this fellow did round her—
>
> *Mrs. Turner:* Let me give that relation.
>
> *Turner:* You cannot, it is as well: pr'ythee sit down, dear Mall, sit thee down, good child, all will be well.—When she came back, she came with something in her apron. . . .

The rattle, usually female, has been well represented here by Mrs. Lilian Balch, a working class materfamilias, whose broadcast talk (1949) was recorded by the B.B.C.

> . . . Tony was trying to teach me the crawl, and he said 'Come on Terry, come on,' and enticed Terry in and poor Terry—we splashed him and—and of course, the water wasn't very warm that time and it absolutely killed Terry for quite a while, he wouldn't come near the water. And of course, the little one enjoyed the water very much—David, and at the place where we were staying they had a dog called Tony. First of all he was terribly rough—he chased us all off the premises altogether. But after the first day, he got quite used to us, and it used to take us down the beach, and park itself near our deckchairs, and nobody dare come near us and one day we lost the dog and we all hunted for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> the dog, and when we got home it was on the step waiting for us. And another day we all decided to go on the steamer trip. We chose 'The Daffodil', and the boys had great fun on the steamer. They flew all over the ship and stood in the prow and got wet through with spray and came back to the saloon where Daddy and I were sitting quietly as if we owned it, you know, and with their hair plastered all over their head, and Tony, one of the twins, brought his hair over his eye, and stuck his finger in his nose, and said 'Heil Hitler', and so they'd—he was properly mobbed in the saloon and the steward had to turn them out. He was quite nice about it, and the boys were much intrigued as to what the paper bags were for that they gave us when we went on the steamer. So Doug said 'I know, come on—they've got lots and lots of lovely currant cake,' he said, 'it's to put the cake in.' So we went to buy the cake, and there was—there was lovely cake on the steamer. . . .

The perfect silentiary has naturally evaded this anthology, and so has the naval or military meiotic—'We had a spot of bother with the enemy soon after breakfast, and about twenty of us got scuppered, but probably rather more of them. Things quieted down after that until stand-to, when they come on again, and reduced us to six or seven rifles. I got winged and incidentally lost part of my foot to a grenade, so had to go a bit slow until midnight when B company came along. We weren't sorry to get back, I mean the other fellow and myself, for a cup of tea at the dressing station.'

STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233) SHOWING THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION OF The Hudson Review, published quarterly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1953.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, The Hudson Review, Inc., 439 West Street, New York 14, N. Y.; Editors, William Arrowsmith, Joseph Bennett and Frederick Morgan; Managing editor, Lisa Dyer, all same address.

2. The owner is: The Hudson Review, Inc., 439 West Street, New York 14, N. Y., a New York membership corporation not authorized to issue stock, whose members are: Joseph Bennett, Constance Morgan and Frederick Morgan, all same address.

3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting; also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner.

LISA DYER, Managing Editor

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 30th day of September, 1953.

WILLIAM G. NIBLETTE

(My commission expires March 30, 1954.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But Mr. Sutherland gives a vintage example of the anti-talker quoted by Edward Lytton Bulwer in 1831:

> 'No—I assure you—now er—er—that—er—it was the most shocking accident possible—er—poor Chester was riding in the Park—er—you know that grey—er (substantive dropped, hand a little flourished instead)—of his—splendid creature!—er—well sir, and by Jove—er—the—er—(no substantive, flourish again)—took fright, and—e—er—' here the gentleman throws up his chin and eyes, sinks back exhausted into his chair, and after a pause adds, 'Well, they took him into—the shop—there—you know—with the mahogany sashes—just by the Park—er—and the—er—man there—set his—what d'ye call it—er—collar-bone; *but* he was—er—ter-ri-bly—terribly'—a full stop. The gentleman shakes his head—and the sentence is suspended to eternity.
>
> Another gentleman takes up the wondrous tale thus logically: 'Ah! shocking, shocking!—*but* poor Chester was a very agreeable—er'—full stop!
>
> 'O! devilish gentlemanlike fellow!—quite shocking!—quite—did you go into the—er—today?'
>
> 'No, indeed; the day was so *un*—may I take some wine with you?'

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED